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**“WHEN SHE REACHED THE TOP LANDING SHE WAS
STILL HEARKENING FOR MORE OF HIS MUSIC”**

BILLY DUANE

A NOVEL

By

FRANCES AYMAR MATHEWS

*Author of "Pretty Peggy" and
"My Lady Peggy Goes to Town"*

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1905

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*To
My Beloved Mother*

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CHAPTER I

At the Baths of Triborg

SHE sat on the broad window seat with his last letter in her hand. She was not reading it, but the rather looking out over the blue lake across the promenade, and up to the distant mountains pricking the twilight sky.

The band was playing in the Kursaal Gardens opposite the Beau Rivage Hotel where she was stopping, already groups of gaily dressed women and a fair sprinkling of men were walking about.

She was at Triborg in order that her boy, aged three, should get the benefit of the Baths and be under the constant care of the great Herr Doctor von Fincke, the specialist whom the physicians in New York had unanimously agreed was the only man in the profession who could straighten the baby's spine that had so suddenly developed a twist. She had been there at Triborg almost a year now, alone with the child and a maid.

He, her husband, could not leave the country, on account of his political and business interests.

At first he had had no other thought than to go, of course; but under the pressure his party and his partner brought to bear, under her serene tranquility at going without him, her calm masterful way of arranging her affairs for herself, he had succumbed and stopped at home.

During the year of her absence, she had had, indeed,

many letters from him: before their marriage she had had many also.

She now, there being just enough light in the sky, opened the last letter and read it over again.

It was a well-composed letter: it told about as much as the average man's letter ever tells, which is not wholesale eulogy; it began "My dear girl," and it ended "Yours only." It did ask a question. "How soon now do you think you can come home? Doctor von Fincke's last report was encouraging: my blessed—no, our blessed—little chap, he says will be as straight as an arrow and as strong as a pine before long: when then am I to expect you?"

She rose, went in from the balcony and tossed the letter into her work-basket. She heard the little boy's prattle in the adjoining room.

"When, then, am I to expect you?"

To be sure, she had to go home, that fact had been constantly before her mind ever since she had been in Triborg, yet now that the boy was pronounced virtually cured, now that there was no excuse whatever for remaining, she hesitated over the leaving.

Why?

Another man?

Not one of the least consequence to her; dozens swarmed as they always will about any young and attractive woman, more especially when her husband is an existent but unseen quantity.

In fact an inevident husband is as fascinating to some men as the wife who bears his name—so long as he never appears.

Marjorie had married Billy Duane just as dozens of young women marry—for what is called "love." I don't know that there is any other name for it, if I were inventive I should patent one.

They each "loved" then the other.

There is, it must be allowed, an unthinking, in-

stinctive, matter-of-course love, and, besides, there is that other much-thinking, distinctive, very unusual love.

Of this latter essence, neither this man or woman knew anything whatever, married to each other though they were.

After the little boy came, after it had been baptized by Bishop Gordon King, after the pretty house on Madison Avenue had settled down again into normal ruts and routines, broken by a baby's cries and needs and wants; when Duane saw his wife ready once more to resume her place in society, to go to dances, the opera, theatre and all the other functions, he had, the first time they went together, wanted, in a grouping fashion, to say something or other to her unlike anything he had ever said before.

He had even, as the carriage took them swiftly down the street, opened his lips to speak, and closed them again with a curious smile as he looked at her.

She was extremely pretty, this woman beside him, but—what was the use! She would not know or care what he meant if he should attempt to voice the surge and thrill that stirred him to-night as he had never been stirred before in his life. So he held his tongue, and presently they reached the end of the route, and in ten minutes he quitted her, to go up to one of his clubs and return later.

She too, sitting beside him in the coupé, had been minded to put her arm up about him and say some things that she had never even thought in their past; she looked at him from the corners of her eyes, and, noting the faint smile on his face, fell back and drew her wrap more closely about her.

Why should she?

If there were heights and depths she had never scaled or fathomed, only lately surmised, they were not for her. Indeed, very likely there were no heights and

no depths at all, and the vague, unsubstantial pulse that beat so newly in her breast was a phantom, a delusion.

She had a happy life—lots of friends and money, and a beautiful home, and a husband and a child and the best dressmaker in town!

Marjorie smiled until her eyes shone with tears, and then they had reached the house they were bound for.

Each blindly, subtly, incoherently, was thirsting for the unusual, groping for the distinctive.

It is true that one often travels to Kimberley in search of the jewel one returns to find sparkling on one's finger.

As Marjorie sat there in her rooms at the Beau Rivage in Triborg, she recalled with vivid exactness that evening so long ago. Yes, she must go home, back to Billy and the old life: and it must be confessed she shrank a bit from the idea. The life at Triborg was monotonous, pleasant, droning, amusing; what is called entertaining and charming, with people similarly to be described constantly coming and going for one's diversion.

The air was perfect, the climate equally so; she had taken up studies in languages with a clever Frenchwoman—and you know there is nothing on earth so clever as a clever Frenchwoman—except a clever American.

She rode, she drove, she read, chatted with stupid people and brilliant people, ran over to Paris now and then, met friends from home, took little jaunts into Holland and Switzerland, led a gay little life, in short, very vivid, very bright, intelligent, alert—and yet where that pulse that had throbbed at her soul for those few moments in the carriage that time when she and Billy were on their way to the Propper's—where that pulse did not beat.

And that pulse being the one that makes any life

on earth worth and worthy, it may be easily estimated how actually satisfactory Marjorie's life was to her.

She vaguely knew this: she feared an awakening: in Triborg she had no cause for fear: if all the one thousand bells the old town boasted were to jangle her out of her bed at midnight; if all the brilliant men she met or might meet were to fall sighing great oaths at her feet; still Marjorie knew that the best, the splendid best and greatest of her would sleep on—in Triborg. What it might do in New York, she could not make out, only surmise, and she preferred Triborg.

That night she chose to dine alone in her little parlor, after the boy went to his crib. It was now eleven o'clock: she put out her lights and, shrouded in the darkness, went out on her balcony and sat down, leaning her head among the vines, her hand clasped upon the railing, listening to the last number on the programme across in the Gardens.

It was all finished presently, not being any special gala time: she watched the musicians tying up their leaves and packing their instruments into the cases, then filing quickly away behind the last tag of the people, while laughter echoed and the electric bulbs flashed down, leaving the place to the stars and the soft lap of the lake waves on the grassy shore.

Yes, she kept repeating to herself, she must go back to America: and what in the world was that going to mean to her, now that for a whole year she had been free to resume the old splendid freedom of her girlhood, with the added liberty and added poise which marriage alone can bestow?

At last she slipped down off the chair to her knees beside it and laid her head between her hands, leaning on the cane seat.

Is it possible, she thought, that I am actually dreading to meet and be with my husband? Is it possible that I wish I were not married? What is the matter

with me? What new requirements am I developing that I feel an instinctive positiveness he cannot meet? Am I no longer commonplace, or is it that I have never been commonplace? And why can I not stop just here in Triborg always, always, until I am very old, until the time when nothing matters and one cares only for one's food and sleep?

"Sleep!" she now spoke, not aloud but in that whisper one sometimes gives one's soul as if it could understand the better if it heard sounds.

"Sleep? I am asleep now, as much asleep as if I were ninety in an arm-chair. That's just it; asleep and I don't want to waken. If I should waken, then I should feel, and crave, and pant, and struggle, and yearn for something which I can never have. If I could but stay in Triborg! But I must go back to New York. Well, possibly even in New York there will be such noise and racket and going to and fro and hither and yon, that I won't be wakened there and can still sleep on."

There were no tears in either her eyes or voice, just a dead level of calmness, the sort of calmness that is resultant from the imagination of conditions as yet unexperienced.

There wasn't any self-pity in her attitude or any outcry. Marjorie knew that there was no one to blame for the way she felt—not even herself—she had not married to please anyone except herself and the man who sought her: yet the muddle and riddle of it all mystified and appalled her. She was angry and indignant with herself because, having all things, she felt herself a beggar; having attained the very uttermost that can come into a woman's life, she yet felt it all as a bare and niggardly matter from which she would fain escape at least a little longer to dream the dreams that Triborg brought her.

Triborg, at any rate the Kursaal and the Gardens, were peaceful enough by this, not a sound about save

far-off laughter, very far off, and now music from a piano; just a ripple at first, then a few melting and broken chords—the very first of these, grasped and struck with a peculiar forceful tenderness, had made Marjorie lift her head like a deer that scents a possible danger; then she smiled—she had always said she believed that music of a certain calibre could lure her into anything, and behold she heard such music now.

The piano, heaven knows!—or at least it may be positively asserted the other place does—is an instrument fraught with almost incalculable terrors. Marjorie loathed it—most persons with sensitized nerves do loathe it—but not when touched as this one in the Hotel parlor at Triborg was that summer night.

Soft as the swell of a bud, keen as the scimitar, carrying as the song of an angel, glacial withal, but glacial to the point where things are fiery; swimming in sensuous rhythm, appealing, crying out, imploring, whispering to her.

Yes, to her; that was it: Marjorie heard it speak to her, for her, as no human tongue, no other music, ever had done before.

It enveloped and enfolded her as a garment: she stood up there in the starlight and was filled and satisfied with it; forgot everything else on earth but it; husband, child—all sank into an easy oblivion. Why not? This was to live; this was to breathe and be thankful indeed. This message brought to her by these entrancing sounds was the message she had been, unconsciously perhaps, listening for all her life.

She must shake off the rags of her past, humdrum, every-day, and draw close this magnificent magical mantle which at last revealed her to herself; at last told her why she had been born, and informed her wholly that it had been worth while.

The player stopped short, suddenly.

Marjorie sighed, laughed, waited for it to begin

once more. In the brief moment she realized fully that things could never again be as they had been with her; that she must get away from Triborg quickly; that she needed all the swing and hurry that New York could give her now to help her forget this little quiet corner in Germany—that, in short, she had turned a far sharper corner than the day she quitted St. Thomas's as Billy Duane's bride.

Then the player began again, a more and more impassioned strain. It was to be described in no other way than to say concisely that it was the outpouring of a man to the woman whom he loved—unrestrained, untrammelled, wordless, but so much the more abandoned and voluble and striking to the soul.

Marjorie stepped into her room, picked up a lace wrap, threw it over her dinner-gown, touched up the lights, opened the door, went out into the corridor, and down the stairs.

Go?

Why not?

Most assuredly.

Something called her, her name, her brain, her flesh and blood and soul, and indeed she must answer.

As she descended she heard voices very low in the wide hall, uttering monosyllables interspersed with sighs of rapture; the kind of tribute girls and women too pay to such music as this.

“Beautiful!” American.

“Divine!” American.

“Soulful!” English.

“Ach Gott!” German, and “Dieu, Dieu!” French; and so on in many tongues since all nations flocked to the Baths, each enthusing person unmindful of the fact that her exclamation cut the music like a bread-knife at work on a humming-bird.

But Marjorie did not hear these joyous and sentimental persons. She slipped through their ranks up to the

door of the big public salon, and stood there leaning her head a little against the door and looking at the player.

He faced her, but for a time his eyes were not raised.

Then, as the music rose, fell, hushed to the mere echo of a fainting sound; as the *fräuleins* and *mademoiselles* and misses hushed too with eyes ecstatic, Marjorie's eyes and the player's met.

He stopped at once and rose and bowed to all his friends, still with his half-opened, blue, Semitic eyes on her face; shook his head when these sweet young ladies begged for more; turned away with a Herr Professor from the College, and someone said to Marjorie, "That is De Barreaux."

"Is it indeed?" she replied.

"Yes, you know him of course; you have heard him before, in Paris perhaps or London?"

"No, never."

"Oh, impossible! the greatest pianist in the world. But difficult, so difficult."

"His music?" suggested Marjorie, her thoughts not quite with the explosive young person at her side.

"No! no! He himself. He will not play but when he feels like it: he is a genius: he is—one does not know how to describe it!"

"No," said Marjorie pleasantly; her own voice sounded quite smooth and conventional as she added, "I should say it would be a task."

Then she left the salon and went across the hall, up the stairs; going slowly, with the dim intuition that he might return to the piano again, yet half a hope.

When she reached the top landing she was still hearkening for more of his music with head turned a trifle backward: something barred her way, for she was pressing on despite her looking back.

She glanced up.

It was he.

"I beg your pardon, Madame!"

He had made up his mind to have speech with her the moment he beheld her, and with subtle tact he had obtained his intention.

He stepped aside.

"Not at all," she answered and was sweeping past him, gathering her lace fallal a bit closer, proud, imperious, stone-walled on the instant.

If he had the beautiful, irresistible streak of Hebrew ancestry in his veins he was also most typically modern, with the audacity of today enforced by the pertinacity of yesterday.

"May I be permitted to tell Madame that I honor and prize her having deigned to listen to my poor music just now?"

She inclined her head regally: a motion neither encouraging nor forbidding.

Having the ancestry he had, and having met someone whom he had long pictured, dreamed of, foreseen as it were, he was undaunted.

"May I beg that Madame will permit me to be presented to her on Thursday if I may be so audacious as to name a time? I have concert engagements at Heidelberg and Mainz from to-morrow on—by the Herr Professor, the Doctor von Fincke? if Madame knows him?"

"I know him," she replied.

"And he may present me to Madame?"

She inclined her head.

"On Thursday?" he cried eagerly.

She nodded slowly with an air half-haughty, half-gracious.

"I thank you, humbly," he said.

And Marjorie with the merest inclination passed on to her rooms.

On Thursday afternoon, before the train got in from Heidelberg, Mrs. Duane had left Triborg for Paris en route for America.

CHAPTER II

Billy Sets His House in Order

"You are sure to be elected, my boy," Bishop King said to Billy.

They were sitting over dinner together at the Metropolitan.

The younger man smiled and shook his head.

"By no means sure, sir. I've been in politics too short a time to venture to even hope it, I suppose."

"That's got nothing to do with it," exclaimed the Churchman testily. "Vulgarly speaking, you're not in politics now and never will be, but the people want you—all kinds of people—and I believe you'll be elected Mayor of New York."

Duane laughed.

He hoped he would be for many reasons.

"What does Marjorie say to it all? It was such a sudden move, the nomination, you were such a very dark horse that I presume the papers told her next to nothing."

"Marjorie never reads the papers. I've told her nothing. I want to give her a surprise when she comes—that is, if I should carry the day."

"Is she coming home?" excitedly.

"Yes, by the Cedric, due next Sunday, just before election."

"The boy?" asked Gordon King anxiously.

"Dismissed by von Fincke, cured."

The older man put out his hand across the table impulsively and grasped Billy's.

"God be thanked!" he said reverently.

"Amen," said Duane cheerfully.

Gordon King looked at his niece's husband.

Billy was not superficial or weak or flimsy, but it did strike Gordon King that his tone was light and his demeanor and expression lighter still as his son's cure was spoken of.

Had the year's absence and the sudden plunge into the whirlpool of public life routed out of the man all the old phase of domesticity, the husband and father, the anxiety and carefulness of pride in love?

"It's rather of a pity, isn't it," said the Churchman after a slight pause, "that Marjorie and the little lad should happen to be coming home just at this crisis?"

Billy glanced up quickly, waiting for the evident finish of the speech.

"You'll be torn in two, between wanting to be with them entirely, and the necessity for being round about town with your supporters and constituents day and night."

"Easily adjusted," answered Billy with alacrity. "To tell you the truth, sir, I am so damned—pardon!" The splendid rush of blood to his face, the unusual tremor in his voice compelled Gordon King to gasp rather than to object.

"So awfully glad to have her back that—er—" Duane halted, stirred his demi-tasse and broke into a laugh.

"Why, Uncle Gordon, I'm like a boy: no! no!—not a boy, boys know nothing of such thoughts as I have." He swallowed the coffee at one gulp, set down the cup, and was silent.

"Ah," cried Gordon King, "I see, I know! I am an unworthy old fool."

"How's that?" asked Duane, laughing but not over-interested.

"I feared perhaps that——"

"Out with it!" exclaimed Billy.

"That you had drifted a bit away from—the home ties—I'm ashamed of myself!"

"Oh!" said the younger, laughing most joyously, "That's all right, sir, that's all right. No, no, I haven't drifted an inch, but if you'll excuse me I'll have to swim hard now to meet those fellows at headquarters. If you don't mind, I'll just have time to jump into a machine and reach by eight."

"Not in the least my boy. Will you be round at the house to-night? Your Aunt Sophy will be back from her Baltimore visit at ten. I'm going to the Whitehall to meet her. Come in for a bite and tell us how things look, will you?" He talks as Billy is being fitted into his top-coat by the waiter.

"Can't," returns the other succinctly. "Not to-night. Love to Aunt Sophy. Good-night."

He sprang into the cab and reached the hall just in time to make his speech. When it was over he would not listen to a supper, or even have a drink and a smoke.

"Can't, boys, can't do it. Not to-night."

And into the machine again and up to Madison Avenue, home, up to the second floor, quickly into his smoking-jacket, slippers, a cigar between his teeth, the lights up to the full and her last letter out of his pocket.

She was coming home at last.

He recalled the Bishop's curious little excursion into his feelings about the wife and boy and smiled.

He was glad the boy was cured. It was the boy she had given him. He had always been jealous of it since it was born. No one knew this, not even Marjorie, who suspected nothing less.

Billy was a man whose wife, no matter how much or how little he cared for her, would always stand to him for first place over and above his child.

They're not rare, these men, but most of them are afraid to say so, because the world sets a seal of supe-

riority on the man who prates about his children and neglects their mother.

When Marjorie first went away he had not missed her especially, save as one must miss an accustomed quantity when it suddenly ceases to be in its usual place. Then he involved himself and became involved in politics. He had schemes of reform; great splendid plans for making the big city of his birth the better, and its people, all its people, the poor and the rich, the happier for his having lived.

Mostly these plans and motives put her out of his thoughts to a great extent. His life, at least that side of it known to his wife, all at once looked to him pale, squalid, contracted: this splurge and push and fight and hard-handed fisticuff with vulgar forces and large issues filled him with desires that roused and energized him, made him take pleasure in the grapple and tussle of it all.

Beside this vivid, keen existence all those three years with her seemed an impossible inanity.

Well, what will you have?

Men and women must marry.

Was he regretful of his marriage or of his choice?

No, by no means.

He had married Marjorie because he loved and wanted her; she had been reluctant, but he believed she loved him. That was a chapter that was closed. There was nothing more to think about it.

The tang and salt of existence did not lie that way.

Fact is, he guessed he did not know what love—as he had dreamed of it once—was at all.

So much the better.

Marjorie didn't know either.

Neither of them was capable of it.

Once that love had been his keenest dream and hope. Once he had thought the world and all it contained would be well lost, nay, gaily pitched overboard for its fair sake.

That was when he first met Marjorie.

Today it had eked out to a memory and a cheerful smile and a certain ambition that was catching him up in its jaws and grinding him out in the form of a political aspirant.

For of course he saw the White House in front of him.

Just now, however, it was, practically speaking, Marjorie's letter in which she said, "We will sail by the Cedric and reach, I suppose, on the seventh," that occupied that position.

Jove! that would be in three days. What an upset it would all be.

Certainly the rooms must be set up; he must tell the servants and not forget to bid them order flowers—and by the way, he believed he'd just look in at Marjorie's rooms, to the front, now, and see if there was anything needing.

He hadn't been in them for a year, not since she went away. What with stumping about and visiting "up State"—he had the governorship in mind undoubtedly en route to the White House—and trips here and there, he had not really been much at the Madison Avenue house at all.

Her rooms, to be sure. As he stood at the threshold, holding the portière back with one hand, he remembered what he had said to her uncle Gordon King about being so glad she was coming.

He was.

Of course he was.

He loved her?

Certainly he did.

Not in that wonderful fashion that he had once relied on and hoped in, but quietly, dispassionately, agreeably, as a man should who had been married now for four years.

Then he went into the room, opened the closet doors;

some of her gowns hung there; he touched them and the swish fetched the faint perfume of the orris-root to him from their folds. He drew back as if he had been struck.

He went to the dressing-table and the chiffonniere and jerked open the drawers, with, it's true, a queer sense of guilt; pshaw! were they not her baubles and was not she his?

He pulled out some laces and veils and women's duds all saturated with the orris-scent she had left, not wanting when she went. He drew them across his lips.

He sat down on the bed.

Truly her baubles were hers, and she was his.

Now, was she?

Billy sprang up and walked the floor.

Was she?

She went away and left him without a murmur of reluctance. He had never had a letter that said she was wishing to see him or to return!

God! he had never thought of these things before. Was his memory at fault? Had she perhaps expressed a desire to come back or to see him?

He would fetch her letters in here and read every one of them over.

Now he knew why he had refused both the boys and the Bishop his society this evening: it had been blind impulse lacking conscious impetus; this must have been the reason.

During the next days before election he would have no time, and he must read his wife's letters over before she came.

He did. His memory had not been at fault. There was not an allusion to seeing him or New York.

He set his teeth pretty firmly together as he refolded the letters.

What a damned fool he had been to let her go.

The boy could have gone with his great-aunt; Gor-

don King's wife would have undertaken him with mothering joy and greed.

Could it be that Marjorie had met anyone over there who had supplanted him?

The mere idea threw him into a rage, from which he presently emerged to recall that, so far as he knew, he had never complained of her absence or expressed any haste for her home-coming.

There was haste enough in his blood now, could she but have known it; formless stirrings, enigmatic to him, crushing out the Thought that had always dominated him and replacing it by the Impulse he had held much in hand for some years. He caught up a bodice of his wife's from the open drawer of the chiffonniere and laid his lips to the lining just where her pretty shoulders had touched; then laid it back carefully and sat down at her desk.

What had been the matter with him anyway? he asked himself. Had he never loved Marjorie before, and if not what had made him do so now? Was he such a cad that his heart needed a goad of jealousy to make it beat its best, or was he merely the victim of a phase?

He opened her desk, a thing he had never done before, save as service to her: the object that met his eye was his own photo, the one she had had when they were engaged, looking out at him with frank and untrammelled gaze.

She had left it behind her.

She had no other picture of him.

Then it could not be someone she had met in Europe, but someone seen before she sailed.

Who was it?

Pshaw, why must it be anyone; probably it was not. It was no more necessary that his wife should have a passion apart from him than that he should have one apart from her, and he had none.

Clearly he was a drivelling fool.

Well, no matter what he was, the fact was he longed for and adored her in some new mysterious fashion as he never had, and, as he pictured her, with his eyes closed, he beheld a thousand dainty charms and fascinations of which he had not been conscious before.

The next morning he was off early to Tiffany's to buy the prettiest ring he could find, a yellow diamond set round with brilliants: he said to himself, glowing with strange anticipations, that it should be her new wedding ring: in truth he felt as if he had never been married to her at all, as if all the solemn sweet newness of it were ahead of them both rather than in the past.

Then he went up to Fleischman's and ordered flowers galore, all the roses and pinks and things she liked best to deck the whole house out with, on the day the Cedric was due; down to Arnold's to mystify the clerks by ordering many pairs of number eight stockings of silk and gloves five and three quarters; and half dozens of kimonos of lawn and lace, and half dozens of many other desirable and exquisite things comprising the vast unseen. And then he dropped in at Huyler's for the bonbons and some other place for fruit, and to Schwartz's for a multitude of toys for the little lad.

If the truth must be spoken, the little lad, much loved by his father though he was, was a species of break in the programme his parent was planning, but as he ranged the playthings in the nursery on the third floor he consoled himself with the thought that the child with his nurse would be happy up there most of the time he wasn't out with his ponies and dogs.

It is to be feared that Billy was not what could be called a model father: he had elemental notions of his duty and carried them out with a will and an affectionate patience, but he had yet to learn that a father was made such expressly for the child's benefit.

All these preparations finished, he went headlong back into the campaign. It was five days only off from election. It was two days only off from the Cedric's due day.

How surprised Marjorie would be to hear he was running for Mayor! How proud and happy she would be, he hoped, over him; how he should tremble at the first touch of her hands—her lips. Why! he was a mad man now in his expectation and exultation and—he had been quite calm under a year's separation!

How they would sit together next Tuesday night, far into Wednesday morning, down in the library listening at the telephone and watching the ticker to see whether he was elected or not.

If he were not?

Well, what would that or anything on earth or in heaven matter, so once more he could hold her in his arms.

If he were?

Then it would be to lay his bit of laurel at her dear feet.

He kept Central pretty busy Saturday night and Sunday morning for news of the big ship, and when at last she was sighted Billy rushed out into the waiting machine and got down as fast as he could.

It was a wait to be sure before she docked.

As he watched the boat swirl up to her pier, his eyes fastened on deck spying for the tall slim girl of his heart, which last organ palpitated as it had not ever before, not even on the day of his wedding to the very woman he now awaited.

But she did not come.

Her name was not on the passenger list. She was not aboard the Cedric.

There was no letter and no cable.

Nor could he get any news of her from the other side, although he spent the best of the day in rushing

inquiries over to Havre, Liverpool, Cherbourg, and Southampton.

As he sat down in the flower-decked house that night, alone, such a fever and passion of unrest, and terror for her safety, and love possessed him, as made him perfectly useless as a candidate for Mayor or anything else. Luckily it was Sunday.

No, Marjorie had not come.

CHAPTER III

Mrs. Propper and Her Two Detrimentals

"IMOGENE," said Mrs. Propper to her older daughter, "I have been to see the Bishop."

Imogene, who was one-and-twenty, and Dolly, who was fifteen, both looked up in haste as their mother, who was thirty-eight, very pretty, very well-gowned, and very graceful, tossed off her turban, rolled down her gloves and seated herself in the rocker which took up the most of the space in the library of the flat on East Fifteenth Street.

Dolly's eyes flashed, but she did not speak.

Imogene gasped a bit as she stopped the sewing-machine and said:

"Well?"

"I don't know whether it's 'well' or not," replied the mother, looking over to the mirror and pulling out her pompadour.

"I declare I am so upset. I expected everything to be—" there was a perceptible halt here in Mrs. Propper's choice of expressions—"to be settled," she continued, flicking the dust from her frills, "very soon now and, of course, the moment it is, Ja—Mr. Stowe wishes our marriage to take place."

"'The moment' it's settled, mama!" exclaimed Dolly with purposeful aghastness in her round young face.

Imogene cast a glance of surprised admiration at the former's temerity.

"Yes, 'the moment' is what I said and meant. Dolly, you are a child and can't comprehend the attitude

of a man or a man's feelings. If"—here Mrs. Propper sighed and swept her handkerchief from her blouse pouch—"if I had only had the necessary money, you, poor child, should be in some nice country boarding-school instead of here with me while all my troubles are pressing so thickly upon me!"

"I should think, mama," answered Dolly, who was clear-headed and unafraid of anything, "that in your troubles was just the time for your children to be with you, and I also think as you know, that in my opinion Mr. Stowe is the very worst trouble you have on hand." With which Dolly took up her book and her mother would have cried, save for the fact that the operation would have militated against her complexion.

"Dolly, hush! for heaven's sake!" cried Imogene.

Dolly vouchsafed no reply.

"I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Propper, "I wish, Dolly, that you would put on long dresses at once and do up your hair, since you are in your own opinion capable of advising me. I think it is high time that you were booking a husband."

Imogene laughed nervously.

Dolly read on.

"You have handicapped me long enough. I am positive the Earl of Seaborough would have offered himself to me down at Narragansett last season, had it not been for your inopportune arrival. He thought, I suppose, two daughters all ready to hand were more than he could put up with."

"Oh!" remarks the Child quietly, "Seaborough knew all about me. He asked me to be his Countess before he met you. He was at the Bishop's when I had my visit at Newport in June."

Mrs. Propper gasped.

"And you refused an Earl!" The infringement upon her own admirer entirely lost sight of in the reckless conduct of her rival.

"I did," says the junior.

"Why?" asks the mater.

"First place, he's hideous; second place, I'm a child and I'm going to stop a child as long as I can. I hate grown-up people, at least grown-up women, most of 'em, and I won't marry until I'm sure I adore the fellow and won't want to change him off in a few years."

"Leave the room, Dorothea."

Dorothea rose to go.

"The idea of my own child flouting and insulting me, when, heavens knows! her father, your father," turning to Imogene, "was a brute, and no one, not even the Bishop, blames me for my divorce."

"Is it settled, mama, have you got it?" asks Imogene anxiously.

"Not yet," replies the mother.

"And doesn't Doctor King blame you, mama?" Dolly with wide child's eyes pauses and ventures her inquiry.

"No," snaps the mother, "he does not."

"Well, will he marry you to Mr. Stowe, mama?" asks Imogene in a low voice.

"I don't know, he hasn't decided yet."

"Bully for the Bishop!" cries Dolly, disappearing toward the dining-room.

"Now listen to that," moans Mrs. Proper.

"Don't mind Dolly, mama."

"I won't, but Imogene, it's hard for a young woman like me to be so placed. I don't mind you so much, because you are—self-supporting—" Mrs. Proper's voice sunk to a very thread of sound as she glanced carefully toward the kitchen, "but Dolly hasn't an idea of anything like independence or self-reliance or marriage."

"Oh, mama, she's too young!"

"Nonsense, I was married at sixteen and your grandmother at the same age."

"And both of you regretted it."

"I don't know," says Mrs. Propper slowly. "Of course your father began to disagree with me very soon, and then when he said I was carrying on a flirtation with Colonel Savage—I wasn't anything of the sort, Mrs. Savage was too keen for that—and I found out he was in love with Mrs. Townsend, why of course things were pretty badly mixed. All the same, a divorce isn't so bad; it's rather a cachêt. I don't mind it. Jack doesn't mind it a bit."

"He couldn't," says the daughter, "he's divorced himself."

"Yes, I know," answers the mother. "I don't care if he is." She rose and looked at the immense solitaire shining on her left hand.

She was a woman who might live to ninety and yet would never be any older save in looks. Facile, superficial, clever enough, possessing that indefinable ability to please a certain kind of man which is the right of way with her class.

"I can talk to you, Imogene. I can't talk to Dolly; but both of you must know I am doing the best thing in the world for myself and for you."

"Why? How?" asks the girl quickly.

"Why, it's true you earn a very nice little income and are superbly gowned by O'Leary for playing clothes horse to her 'creations,' but that can't go on forever. Dolly costs me a lot every year and don't do a thing. Now suppose O'Leary shuts down on you—she might you know."

"Yes," assented Imogene, "I'm not as tall as she would like me to be."

"Aha! you see. Then suppose I don't marry Mr. Stowe, where are we? I must have things, I can't live without them. You don't marry. I must. It's clear as daylight."

"I suppose so," said the daughter, looking down and

furtively peeping at the slim gold band hidden on her third finger under another ring.

"But you say the Bishop wants to think it over about performing the ceremony?" she added presently.

"Yes. Oh let him think! He's got to do it. I'll force him to."

"How?"

"Oh, I'll weep."

"Don't powder that day then, mama."

"Imogene, that sounds like Dolly! I'll bring every argument to bear. I'll tell him I'll run off without any marriage at all."

"But if he won't do it," suggests the daughter, "there are lots of ministers that will, or there's the Mayor, he marries people, doesn't he?"

"'Mayor' indeed! Of course he does. By the way I saw Mrs. King while I was at the Bishop's and they're just wild about the election. You know Billy Duane's running for Mayor and everybody's sure he'll be elected."

"So he is, I read it in the paper. Well, then, Mr. Duane would perform the ceremony," added the daughter as she resumed the sewing-machine and a shirt-waist for her sister.

"Indeed, he'll not have the chance!" exclaimed Mrs. Propper. "I'll be married by a Bishop. I have always had everything, done everything with a certain seal upon it and I don't propose to quit now."

"But, mama, if he won't!"

"He shall."

"Bishop King has very peculiar views on some things," hesitates Imogene.

"Maybe he has, but I have views too. Besides, now, the dear man always frowned on skirt-dancing by society women; when he saw me do my cachucha for charity he gave in at once."

"I know," responded the girl still doubtfully.

"Mama," she said, "why didn't you take up Seaborough and be a Countess?" she looked a little curiously at her mother, "if I may ask?"

"Why didn't I?" the older woman says in a lower tone while her light large eyes with their slightly accentuated brows looked off a bit to an unseen distance.

"Because I love Jack Stowe."

Of the concentrated passion in this voice there had been no hint in all her earlier chatter.

There was such a determination and fixity, such a singular vim in it as made Imogene start, and her sewing-machine stop.

"Im," she said in the way of one girl confiding to another, "I've always loved him, before I married your father. We had a falling-out, he went off to South America; when he came back I had you." She sighed: her two children had been a great burden upon her, of which she made no smallest secret.

Imogene sighed too.

"That's why I refused Seaborough. But that Dolly should have done it too is preposterous. I wonder if she couldn't pick him up again in her long dresses?"

"She wouldn't," remarked Imogene.

"Why, then you might, Im. I do so love a title. I've always looked forward to one of you marrying a nobleman. What do you say? I'll have Jack ask him down to Westbury for a week-end, and we'll go too, and as like as not if you play your cards well he'll propose to you; you look like me: the third in the family and there's luck in the number three."

"Is there?" says Imogene vaguely.

"Will you do it?" asks her mother abruptly.

"No," the girl answers coldly.

"Well, what will you do, then? You see, Imogene, Mr. Stowe will be pleased, I am sure, and happy to do all he can for you, but he will expect you to marry, and if you persist in declining to make yourself agreeable to

all the men, I can't undertake to have any bachelor women hanging about us as a permanency!"

"I do make myself agreeable to some of the men," murmured Imogene above the rattle of the machine. "Don't I?"

"Yes!" cried the indignant mother, "you do, to Dickey Peevor!"

Imogene turned scarlet but hid it behind the shirt-waist.

"The most ineligible fellow in town," continues Mrs. Propper. "He lives, heaven knows where!"

"He lives at the Waldorf!" exclaims Imogene hotly.

"Yes, he gets his mail there and sleeps on the fourteenth story in a cubby-hole five feet square, and takes his meals—at anybody's house he can get them!"

"He does not!" retorts Miss Propper still more hotly. "He takes his meals at——"

She halted and looked out the window straight into the next flat.

"Where?" urges her mother cruelly.

"At Macy's," says the girl in a low voice.

Mrs. Propper shrieked with laughter.

"That's too good. Well, I didn't suppose it was as bad as that! I must tell that at O'Leary's the next time I go up for a fitting."

"I wish you wouldn't, mother."

"Don't call me 'mother' for heaven's sake, Imogene, mama is bad enough. Lord! I wish Jack and I were off today on our wedding tour. Think of it, Paris and a purse without a bottom!" Mrs. Propper now threw off her bodice and slipped out of her long skirt, standing revealed in her very pretty petticoats and corset-cover.

She looked about twenty with her light hair a little dishevelled and a deep color in her cheeks.

"Imogene!" she said, unlacing her boots, "are you

going to marry Dickey Peavor and eat at Macy's"—another burst of mirth—"too?"

"No," answered Imogene, "I never intend to marry Dickey Peavor."

"We'll have Seaborough down next Saturday at Westbury then. O'Leary says you look like a Duchess in her gowns, so you do—but it can only be a Countess." She kissed her elder child.

"Dolly!" she called out impressively, as she ran into the parlor and began pushing all the chairs back against the wall, opening the piano and pulling the lace curtains together.

"Dolly! Come in here and play 'Tessie' for me. I've invented the loveliest steps to it, and I promised Betty Davies I'd dance for her crowd to-morrow night. She's giving a supper for the whole lot, in honor of Captain Grey. Dolly! hurry I say!"

Dolly came and sat down on the stool and played "Tessie" with all the strength of her young fists, while her mother danced.

She was very pretty as she did it. Very graceful, piquante; not quite professional, but just deliciously and dangerously near it with her enhanced complexion and eyes.

The best of it was she enjoyed it so thoroughly herself; flung such arch glances at her own reflection in the mirror before which she swirled; kissed the air at her finger-tips with such languorous grace.

Talk about your French, or Italian, or Viennese women, just get the chance to watch a New York woman do this sort of thing and you'll find the others quite out of the race.

Dolly, pounding the piano for all she (or rather it) was worth, looking at her mother out of the corners of her young eyes, had serious thoughts far beyond the usual scope of her fifteen years.

Dolly mentally exclaimed:

"If I'm a 'piece,' as they call me, now, is it any wonder, with my mother cutting up like this?"

But she pounded on.

When Mrs. Propper sank exhausted on the lounge, Dolly ceased and went back to her room, and fetched out a big doll and cried over it as she rocked it back and forth in her arms, and some such thought as that she would never prance around in such fashion if she had children struggled through her active brain.

"Imogene!" now Mrs. Propper called for her elder daughter.

"Fetch me a glass of iced water, and put just a hint of absinthe in it, dear, and a coffee-spoonful of rum. Mind, only a coffee-spoonful."

Imogene fetched the desired refreshment.

"Speaking of Mr. Duane, Marjorie's coming back at last, her aunt Sophy told me."

"Is the little one better then, I suppose?"

"I never thought to ask!"

Mrs. Propper had a mind trained to oblivion where children were concerned, but obligingly added: "Anyway it's a good thing she's coming."

"Why?" asked Imogene, wild-eyed and a little on the guard. Mrs. Duane and she were great friends in some senses of the word.

"Oh, my dear! don't look so defensive. Billy Duane's a good-looking sort; women like Billy. Billy likes women."

"He does not!" interrupts Imogene indignantly.

"Bah! yes, he does. I know," Mrs. Propper smiles with efficient reminiscence.

"And men like Marjorie, it's as broad as it's long, and the sooner she comes home to look after him and be looked after, the better."

"But, mama, they adore each other."

"They must," says Mrs. Propper with the correct emphasis. "When a man allows his wife away from

him a solid year, and when she stops, they certainly must worship each other!" and she laughed heartily.

"Mama!" said Imogene, "you never saw Mr. Duane pay the least attention to any woman in your life except to Marjie."

"Well, dear, you see I don't spend much of my time with Mr. Duane, so I can't say with positiveness, but——"

"But what?" Imogene stands up and her pretty head, blonde as her mother's was twenty years ago, is held high.

"Oh, don't get into a tantrum! Mrs. King told me just now when I was there that she was so glad Marjie was returning as she had old-fashioned notions that husband and wife should not be separated for so long at a time, if at all."

"Well?" Imogene panted.

"Well!" echoed Mrs. Propper.

"What else did Mrs. King say?"

"Nothing."

"Pshaw! and from that you build up a disloyal scheme for Marjie's husband. Mama, I'm ashamed of you!"

"So you've been obliging enough to tell me before."

"Ah, mama," pleads the girl. "Don't, don't go off on a tangent. I'll wager my head Mr. Duane cares for no one but Marjie, and that she cares for no one but him."

Mrs. Propper sat down to change her stockings and shoes.

She was quite easily diverted from almost—not quite—any given point. So she now said:

"Well, how stupid that must be! To think of what my life would have been if I had cared for your father like that, and he for me! What a lot the people with 'tranquil' lives must miss!"

"Mama," Imogene, twisting the little hidden band

around her finger, knelt beside her mother. "Mama," the tears were in her eyes and her secret dangerously near her lips.

"Now Im," began Mrs. Propper, "don't be tiresome!" tugging ostentatiously at too small a slipper.

"Don't you really wish, mama, that yours had been the 'tranquil life'?"

"Bless my soul!" cried the older woman. "Hear the child. You ought to have belonged to Gordon King. He asked me that very thing this morning."

"What did you tell him, mama?"

"Oh—h—h—," answers Mrs. Propper, "I told him just what he wanted to hear; that's the thing it's always best to tell any man."

"But—?" Imogene persists painfully.

"I didn't mean it—oh no! not by a long shot. I wouldn't have anything a bit different than it is—unless for Jack to have been an English Duke!"

"Not even us?" the girl asks, now risen from her knees and smiling wanly.

"Oh, you'll both marry before too long," is the cheery reply, "and meantime Jack and I shall live abroad mostly and forget all about responsibilities and that. I'll telephone him now to secure Seaborough for Saturday."

CHAPTER IV

Far Up on the East Side of the Town

ON Monday Billy had a short letter from his wife saying she had been detained in London by her tailor and a new gown, and could not tell just when she would sail or by what ship. State-rooms were easy to get at this time of year and not to bother about her at all; Laddie was well and stalking about in knickerbockers as straight as an arrow.

“Laddie!”

The father's eyes flashed.

Yes, he was glad of the boy: of course he was; but why did she not write him of herself? Not a word as to how she fared or felt, as to health, home-coming, or him!

To be sure he had not been in the least communicative as to his own thoughts, ideas, hopes, or aspirations, in corresponding with his wife. In fact up to just now he had taken and let it all be as for granted between them, with the usual result where people of pride and spirit are concerned, that, by so much of the “taking for granted” method, there was nothing left to be taken, either for granted or otherwise.

But poor Billy, astute, clever, long-headed, shrewd, tactful Billy in every matter save this, did not see clearly at all.

He simply couldn't help being totally absorbed in the one thing, and that was that his wife was not beside him, and that he had never so much wanted her in that place as he did now.

Politics, place, power, friends, and henchmen might all go to—any old place they liked.

The Republican candidate for the Mayoralty of the great city of New York sat in his library with a lot of steamer lists before him, paying scant attention to the ticker, and less to the constantly changing groups of men who came in and out of the house all day long on Tuesday, November the third.

If Marjorie only might arrive today or to-morrow! She couldn't arrive today, there wasn't a ship due, all were up at their docks except the *Furnessia*, a twelve-day boat which Marjorie would never have sailed by.

Dan Satterlee, the private secretary, at last ventured to propose dinner in the very midst even of the returns coming in from the earliest wards.

It was only six o'clock, but neither Billy nor Dan had eaten since eight in the morning and Dan was hungry, if his employer was not.

"Dinner!" exclaimed this latter in surprise. "What for? Haven't we dined?"

"No, Mr. Duane, we haven't," was the civil but irritated response. The two men were great friends and of an age.

"Possible!" said Billy. "Well. Come along 'round to the Hyphen then and we'll eat."

Then the ticker began to work fast and the two telephones to ring and a half-dozen messenger boys came tumbling up the steps and were admitted.

Returns from the two most unpromising and most democratic wards were coming in; nay, they were in, and Billy's majority was astounding. In each he had swept the green, and Mr. Satterlee almost executed a war dance then and there, as he chucked quarters to the boys and called back to the telephone Miss, "Goodbye, Girlie."

He laid the figures, hastily jotted down on a scrap of paper, before his chief.

The two men's eyes met, while the bells jingled on and the machine ticked and the hum and buzz of voices was on in the hallway and louder out on the sidewalk.

Billy flushed; he was absurdly given to flushing at crises.

"You're elected, Billy," says Dan in a whisper.

"Not yet, my boy," returns the candidate. But from now on the fear and grip of it laid fast hold of him; he had not known just what ambition meant until he felt success, attainment, almost within his grasp. In other words, up to now his caution had outweighed his hopes, but the goal was in sight and——

Again the boyish steps scampering up the stoop: again the nervous impatient jingle at the wire, the click at the table.

Satterlee seized the messages the lads brought and shot a glance at them.

"It's neck and neck, sir," he says. "O'Kane (the Democratic candidate) is running you close. The East side is his and the upper East too."

"Neck and neck, is it?" asks Billy.

Satterlee places the slips in his chief's hands.

Again the flush swept over the bigger man's face and throat.

"Good!" he said, bringing his fist down on the desk with a thump. "I wouldn't care a farthing for it if there weren't a fight to get it. What's the glory or the good of a walk-over? None."

"It's going to be very close, Billy."

"Close as it can! That's the way I'd have it."

He whirled around in his chair and got up.

The young men at the telephones and the ticker glanced at him and as by common impulse their glances interchanged. None of them, indeed, no one in the world, had ever seen Duane look as he did now.

There was that working in his veins, laughing

though every drop of blood in his body, which transforms any man and most of all a man of his calibre.

Two inspirations, and the two most powerful that exist, transformed and transfigured him: love for a Woman and ambition for an honorable Place.

For the first time in his existence he felt, sweeping him almost off his feet, the magnificent thrill of the candidate who is almost assured of winning: for the first time he felt with it, matching it for splendor and irresistible force, the exultation of the man who realizes to its exquisite extremes his own passion for a woman.

For a few moments Billy Duane didn't see anyone in that room; heard nothing, remembered none of it; just felt from his head to his feet that splendid swirl of pulsating, triumphant, abundant, vivid life and was glad of it.

He strode up and down the room a few times, his hands in his pockets, then he said quietly to Satterlee:

"Come, let's go round for dinner."

"It will at least help to kill the time," Dan answers.

"Pshaw! who wants to kill anything?"

"But we can't know positively until three o'clock in the morning."

"True," ejaculated the candidate. "I tell you what we'll do, Dan, if you don't object?"

"Anything you say, sir."

"We'll cut right across here to the 'L,' take the train up to Cosmo's and sit it out there on the bluff and watch the stars."

"And—the electric colors on top of the Flatiron, eh?" returns Satterlee with a laugh. "Well, so be it."

In less than a quarter of an hour they had reached Cosmo's.

Dan caught the fish from the pond, not only for his own and Billy's dinner, but most obligingly for that of a little Russian honey-mooning pair who were much too nervous to do anything but clasp each others' hands

furtively under their table-cloth and swoon into each other's eyes.

Billy sat lazy, even in the keen night air—for it blew fresh and stinging, for all the Indian-summer time, straight across into their faces from the Palisades—watching the stars twinkle up yonder and the boat-lights flickering on the Hudson up and down.

He was glad to be there where scarce anyone knew him, and none would disturb him, far from the ticker and the bell.

He was a big man, strong, powerful, intense, yet very calm and quiet looking.

None would have suspected from his outward appearance that the tension he was living up to in these hours in the little out-of-the-way Italian restaurant was the greatest he had yet known anything of, although by no means the greatest of which he was capable.

He enjoyed it to the utmost; it was delicious to him to know that the engine in him was beating its best and straining at the top-notch of every ounce of capacity, and to lay his finger on the throttle and say to himself:

“Keep still.”

There was a combined mental and physical exhilaration in this perfect repose outwardly, in contrast to the throb within, which gave him great happiness.

For the nonce this exultation in his position, and in having it and himself so thoroughly in hand, put all else out of his mind—even Marjorie.

For that time there, up by the river, while the Russians waxed talkative over their claret, and while their hands clasped now, innocently enough, on top of the table-cloth; while Dan Satterlee sat and smoked on the steps leading down to the water, his back to Billy, his thoughts on various girls; while a woman way down yonder on the canal-boat “Juliana of Brooklyn” played a jews-harp and her lover sang—for that space

of time after his dinner, Duane was simply in that crucial state of waiting on results which shows up a man in pretty plain colors, unless he has stupefied himself with alcohol at the start.

This latter he had not done.

He had never felt so keen, so alive, so alert, so vigorous, so long-lived and strong-armed; in some dim fashion it occurred to him that had Gordon King been about just then, he might have joyed him by saying he felt that he must have "an immortal soul" after all—because there was something beating and surging in him which, it seemed to him, could never stop and must live on forever.

But Gordon King was not there.

And the head of the little Russian bride sank contentedly on the shoulder of her husband and presently they both slept.

And in another ten minutes, Satterlee, who, to tell the truth, had been up nearly all night for a week past, fell asleep too, dreaming doubtless of several girls; and Cosmo and his wife and the waiters chattered a little in the far-off kitchen; and the girl with the jews-harp ceased playing; only the splash of the river on the little pier could be heard—that and the rumble of the elevated, blocks away.

But Billy Duane did not fall asleep.

He sprang up from the rustic seat and went out on the tiny board-walk and took in deep breaths of the good night air; tossed off his hat, and swung his arms, and jumped up on the bench at the edge of the precipice, and looked off southward to the city over which he hoped to rule.

He saw the wide glow of the lights booming up the sky, the florescent nimbus down the horizon where the city dips to the sea; he heard the far-away surge and rush and roar of it all dimmed to but the shadow of its reality.

And he said,

"Gad! but it's fine just to be alive and have an even chance at all the world contains."

Presently Satterlee woke up with a start: so did the Russian bride and bridegroom, as more people came up to Cosmo's to fish their trout from the pretty pool for their own supper.

And it was about midnight when the candidate and his secretary mounted the elevated for a downtown train.

CHAPTER V

Mrs. Duane Arrives in America

MARJORIE did come by the Furnessia, having run over to Scotland in order to buy some wonderful woollens for her sister Sally's trousseau; Sally was to be married to Tom Eckford very soon now.

Not having cabled to her husband, there was no expectation of being met.

It was just about a quarter of an hour after Billy and Dan Satterlee had left the Madison Avenue house, that the cab rattled up containing the mistress, the lad, and the maid.

The five floors were a blaze of light, the sidewalk was extremely dirty and littered with ballots, cigar stumps, burnt matches and so forth. At least a score of men, mostly with hats on the backs of their heads or over one eye, huddled about the area, walk, and indeed sat peacefully smoking on the stoop!

Certainly this was not her house; there must be a mistake; but no, it was her house, there shone the familiar numbers above the door.

She got out of the cab, followed by the boy and the maid, and the cabman carried the satchels and parcels and rugs; the trunks could not be gotten before the next morning.

The men on the walk and on the stoop edged aside, but did not move away, for her to pass.

Too proud to question, or to betray the sign even of uneasiness, she touched the bell; the door flew open and an excited-looking individual stared out at her inquiringly.

She sailed in without a word, not knowing if she were awake or dreaming.

Rebecca, the old housekeeper, then loomed up in the hallway and the welcome home was vigorous and heart-felt enough at least.

"Things ain't as they should be, Mrs. Duane," murmured the woman, "but of course you understand?" nodding sagely.

Marjorie nodded too, but not a syllable of questioning would pass those trembling red lips.

"We'll know the result, ma'am, before very long now," says Rebecca, glancing at the clock and shaking her head.

"God grant Mr. Duane wins!" she adds piously.

Marjorie was going up the staircase.

"Wins!" she echoed it over and over in her heart.

What had befallen him? Was it a fight for his life that he was making up in his room? What had she come home to?

"I'm so glad, ma'am, that you arrived in time," continues the woman.

"Yes," answers the mistress blankly: she stood still now, at the top of the stairs: she could not move until she knew; she stared at Rebecca and the little old faithful soul looked at her young mistress with keen, kindly eyes.

"Bless you, ma'am! no fear but what Duane'll be elected."

"Of course not!" says Marjorie blithely, while she gasped, took the little lad by the hand and marched into her own rooms.

A spectacle of open chiffonniere drawers, open closet doors, bodices, skirts flung about; masses of carnations and roses everywhere; a bed full of lace kimonos and other sorts of lingerie, all new from the shops; a table full of silk stockings and bonbons, the scent of her orris over it all; her desk open and Billy's old photo looking out at her.

"You had better go upstairs to the nursery, Thérèse," she said to the maid, who went with the lad.

And presently gleeful shouts called her up there too, to behold the multitude of toys, including music-boxes and drums and all the other things that make satanic noises and impart joy to the infantile soul.

When she came down, she closed her doors, took off her hat and coat and seated herself.

So her husband was running for an office.

What office?

She rang for the papers, read them and presently discovered.

He had never told her a word of it. Neither had any member of her own family; not Sally nor her Uncle Gordon King nor her Aunt, Gordon King's wife.

Clearly Billy had not wanted her to know of it; or else they had all thought it unimportant to tell her.

To whom did all these fallals belong? For whom were these flowers and fruits and sweets intended?

Who had been pulling her clothes about and opening her drawers and desk and closets?

It was a bit of a mystery.

Had Billy been——

Pshaw! Billy was a gentleman.

She turned down the lights, put off her gown, got on a *négligée* and tried to think it all out.

The fact that her husband had even had political aspirations had been totally unknown to her. She had not had an inkling of it: she never read the papers; she did not keep track of where he went or what he did, any more than she supposed he had been familiar with her occupations or preoccupations, either one.

Neither had ever distressed themselves that way.

It would be useless and silly to resent her being kept in ignorance, although she would far sooner have died than that Rebecca should surmise her mistress to have come home to these revelations.

She sat there and heard the bell ringing, the messengers running up the stoop and in and out, the hum of men's voices in the house and on the street; presently the flare of a bonfire struck all the room into a glow of red and she heard the shrill voices of newsboys crying "Extra!"

It was nearly midnight.

She opened her door and looked down through the wide square well to the first floor; all the place was brilliant with the electric lights, laughter, the click of the machine and the tinkle and "Hello" of the telephones at work in the library. The horn of an automobile and the whirr of the vehicle as it sped touched her hearing too.

Then the clock in a church tower sounded twelve.

The front door opened and Marjorie bent down over the railing to see? Yes, it was Billy coming in, and Dan Satterlee with him.

He walked straight back to the library.

Billy!

Quite absorbed, unmindful of her. Well, that now was absurd of course. He could not rush to her when he supposed her on the other side of the Atlantic.

Billy!

Very big and strong and fine and quiet, with that certain nonchalant way with him of swinging out of his top-coat and shaking himself spick in his Tuxedo so that he never looked as if a top-coat had come near him.

She heard him talking below and she knelt there in the hall to listen to him.

"Of course I hope we'll win out," he said.

"Great Scott!" Dan Satterlee says. "'Hope'! It's a foregone conclusion."

"Not yet," answered Billy.

She could not hear any more. Men came in, and wine was fetched and drunk, and she went back into her

room and closed the door with a sorrowful sense of being utterly out of the midst of the things that were transpiring: the imminent living, beating things of life.

She sank on the lounge and wished herself heartily back in Triborg.

Triborg: ah yes. There was some one in Triborg who had wanted to know her; who had planned that meeting in the corridor; who must have seen and noticed her before that night.

Well, if Billy could have splendid interests apart from her, it was extremely certain that she had interests at command apart from him.

In point of fact what interests had they in common, Billy and she?

The little lad?

To be sure.

Books? Marjorie read novels and travels and biography. Billy read the newspapers and law.

Music? Marjorie adored it. Billy took his opera as he did his dinner, as a matter of course.

Society? What will you! One must be seen about.

Sports? Marjorie loved her horses and Billy did too. He had no time for golf or yachting, or anything but automobiling, and there they met, for both were addicted to going as fast as the machine would allow, and far faster than the law did.

She thought over all this as she lay there in the darkness, for she had closed the shutters and the faint glimmer from the globe across the street was all that broke the gloom.

She turned her head on the cushions.

Billy and she had no interests in common; less than ever now since he was running for public office.

Bah! "interests in common!" What rubbish! She sat up now and almost laughed aloud.

What rubbish! and she knew it. It is people's characters and ways and methods and looks and tones and

tricks and habits that count and make us love them, and it doesn't count a cent's worth of difference if we haven't an interest in common or if we adore Wagner and they loathe his name.

It's the way a person eats and speaks and walks and behaves in all the conditions of life that fascinates us, and it's not and never will be what operas they admire or what artists or authors they prefer.

It isn't what he says, you know,
But—oh—the way he says it!

Marjorie did laugh as she hummed over the brisk little air of her own composing. ,

Then down went her head again among the pillows. Suddenly she heard a plunging footstep up the stairs. Billy's? Yes, she knew it was he.

A headlong dash.

Rebecca had at last told him she was home.

He halted at the closed door just for a second; then, masterful, opened it. The darkness, coming from the blaze of the rest of the house, struck him sightless for the moment.

"Marjorie!" he cried.

"Yes," she answered.

He was beside her now, kneeling by the couch, his arms almost around her.

"We came by the Furnessia," she said, and there was that in her voice that froze the blood in his veins.

His arms fell, and although he did not rise from his knees, he drew away a little from her.

She knew just the effect that her words had; and although she was not in the least a deliberate or scheming person, she had the instinct that if her manner could overbear his impulse toward her—it might.

Marjorie was one of the women who desired no man's love or capitulation unless it overmastered him.

"Did you?" he says rather blankly.

"Yes. Laddie is well as I wrote you."

"I remember."

"Won't you go up and see him? he's asleep I'm sure by this time, but he was so happy over his toys."

"I'll go up and take a look at him by-and-by," he answers with an effort as he glances over at the things he had bought at Arnold's.

"Those things over there," he nods toward the bed full of finery, "I bought them for you the other day."

"That was dear of you," she says, while in the darkness a flood of color rushes over her face.

"I don't know why, I'm sure," he stammers, "for I suppose you fetched over far prettier ones from Paris."

"They're lovely, I'm sure," she replies, each of them speaking with bland and perfunctory courtesy.

"I am running for office," Billy now remarks bluntly, rising and seating himself tentatively on the couch close to his wife.

"Yes?" she interrogates with an interested and rising inflection.

"Mayor," Billy ejaculates.

"Indeed."

"I didn't write you—because—" Mr. Duane halts. Why didn't he write her?

At this crisis he didn't know and therefore he stopped.

"Oh, that's no matter," she answered, rising and leaving him the couch to himself.

"The thing now is, will you be elected, isn't it?"

There was a certain commonplaceness and common-senseness about her speech which sent a chill anew to his very heart.

"Yes, I suppose it is," he says.

"When will it be settled?" she inquires.

"Any time now, within half an hour."

"Oh! so soon?"

"Yes. I say—Marjorie!" Billy jumps up and crosses to her.

She feels the thrill of his craving heart and it makes her tremble; but, with the inordinate perversity of certain women she arrests his movement without a word, but with a motion she opened the shutters and let in the flood of light from the street.

"Look at the bonfire!"

Billy did not look and did not speak.

He knew, or thought he knew, then and there, that his wife had met someone whom she liked while she had been away from him. And he swore he was to blame for having let her go.

She now opened a box of the bonbons and tendered it to him.

He shook his head, took the box from her, set it on the table quickly, and put his arm about her with all the tender fear of a lover's first touch of the flesh and blood that is dear to him.

"Marjorie, are you glad to be home—with me—again?" he asks.

She stood perfectly still wondering what she had better say, while she felt his hand shaking on her shoulder.

Then a pistol shot split in as it were between them, and the band began to play *Hiawatha* under the windows, and rockets went up and men shouted and below there was the rush and stir of a victory.

"What is that!" Marjorie cries, starting. "What does it mean?"

"I'm elected," Billy replies in a lack-lustre way, the strenuousness and purpose and triumph all clean gone out of him. "I told Satterlee to fire off my pistol in the backyard if I won, so that we'd know, and I would not have to leave you."

"Oh!" she exclaims, "don't you want to go down and be with the men?"

"No," he answers, "I don't."

"But ought you not, won't they expect you?"

"I don't know."

"I must congratulate you!" she now cries, as if suddenly glad to have thought of something apposite and becoming to say to him.

He smiled as he took her hand.

"Are you anyway glad about it, little girl?"

"Certainly if you are," she says simply.

"I thought maybe you'd be a bit proud of me"—he falters as he feels the hand withdrawing itself from his.

"To be sure!" blithely, "if you prove a good Mayor!" and she laughed.

"I mean to," he says earnestly. "I mean to sift the fraud, and right the wrong, and heal the wounds, and burn out the sin and crime and shame of the big city—so help me God! to the best of my might."

She said Amen in her heart; and her heart throbbed with exultation, joy, pleasure in him; yet she felt herself outside of it, aloof, apart, and she remembered too those limpid Hebrew eyes that had so wholly included her in their glance that night at Triborg.

"They are calling for you!" she exclaims as the shouts go up both from the street and downstairs.

He came close to her and she felt his warm breath on her forehead.

"Shall I go?" he whispers tensely.

"By all means," she answers, opening the door and closing it after him.

CHAPTER VI

Laddie and Laddie's Father and Mother

PRESENTLY, when the excitement and noise were at highest below, Marjorie went up to the nursery. The boy was asleep and she knelt down beside his bed.

The tears came—hot, scalding, those bitter tears we shed in pity and desolation of ourselves; the woe and failure of us; the miserable breakdown and blankness of our lives; the incompetency and smallness of our accomplishment; the narrowness and disappointment of our surroundings; the utter futility of it all.

She laid her head down on the pillow beside the boy's and thought of women she had heard of who learned to live brave lives just for a child's sake—Marjorie knew she was not one of these; women who lived for society, for admiration, for excitement, for the doing of good deeds—she knew she was not of these either.

That her husband had for one year completely left her out of his entire calculations and interests, his ambitions and aims, stung her to the quick, mortified, embarrassed, and bewildered her. She was not one of the women to take, or rather make, an initiative and calmly put herself beside him at the helm of his new ship; with Marjorie the initiative would have to come from the man always. Billy had so laid down the path, she would walk in it, and she was so proud that she would much have preferred death to telling him how she felt.

Nor would she tell anyone else. Not her younger sister; not her Uncle Gordon King who had been her guardian, nor yet his wife: no one should know that she was in the least an outsider to Billy's public life,

further than that they must already be aware that she had been in ignorance of his running for office.

She took the little lad in her arms for a moment and kissed the smiling little mouth all a-dream with the toy-land that surrounded him. Then the tears came faster.

Who were they that said the child was more than its father to a woman?

They did not know.

Or the fathers of their children had never been as dear as Billy had been to her.

Was he dear to her now then?

No! a thousand times no. She! to care a jot for a man who had shown her so plainly that he could live well and thrive, and make new lines and places and worlds for himself without her!

Billy knew very well that she was one of those for whom a man's chiefest charm is his absorption in her: that failing, or impaired or infringed upon by any other earthly consideration, Mrs. Duane ceased to be interested and would probably know how to turn her attention elsewhere.

She laid the boy back on his pillows, covered him and went down to her room.

Scarcely had she turned the key in the lock than her husband came up; the house now silent, the people gone, the lights down; he halted a moment at her door; she heard him. Then he went on up to the nursery, tip-toeing, to take a look at his son.

He lifted the little chap in his arms and kissed him, fancying in some fond foolish fashion 'twas a bit of Marjorie that he so caressed. He lay down on the bed beside the boy, his arms about him, the chubby face nestled close to his own.

His son, her son, their son.

Then he rose; the child had not wakened, but smiled on in his sleep; the father stood still and fought it out with himself in a very few minutes.

No child that ever was born could stand to him for the woman he loved. He wished there were no child, for had there not been Marjorie would not have gone away from him.

Yet, if absence could so change her, well, then, would it not be better that absence should?

Had she changed?

Pshaw! he was growing fantastic and exacting. He must remember that he and Marjorie were no longer lovers, but sober married people, and that she had never been very demonstrative.

A thousand other things he thought, standing there near the little lad, but finally he turned away and went downstairs to his own room and sat there by his desk, opening and shutting his watch to look at her picture, and telling himself in just so many curt, sharp sentences as he would have used to inform a clerk of some new duties, that henceforth he and his wife were to lead a different life from the one before she had gone to Tri-borg; telling himself that a crisis had come; he did not altogether comprehend it, possibly did not want to, would try to forget it, but nevertheless there it was, and the gist and substance and proof of it was that he had not ventured to give her one kiss, and she had been within his reach.

He took the slip of paper from his pocket which had told him of his election: smiling he twisted it up, touched it to the gas-jet, lighted his cigar and sat there smoking until his man knocked at the door at seven o'clock to waken him.

CHAPTER VII

Tommy's Last Bachelor Dinner

TOMMY ECKFORD sat at the head of the table, Lord Seaborough at his right—he was to be best man at the impending wedding—the chair at the host's left was vacant; next to Seaborough sat Dickey Peevor, while the Honorable Cecil Haven, Gerald Knox, Frederick Irving, Aleck Le Roy, Woodward Clarke, and Dan Satterlee with a half dozen more good fellows made up the personnel of Tommy's last bachelor dinner, for on next Thursday he and Sally Livingston, Marjorie's sister, were to be married, by Gordon King, of course, and at St. Thomas's.

The seat at the other end of the board was vacant also and it, as well as the one at Tommy's left hand, remained so through several courses.

"Where is Mr. Duane anyway?" asks Seaborough.

"Had to go to the opera with Mrs. Duane" answers Tommy. "Just to show himself in the box. Be here soon now."

"Keeps a tight rein on his wife, doesn't he?" laughs Le Roy.

"'Tight'!" cries Seaborough, "I hoped he was sober!"

"Come now!" exclaims Satterlee, while the men all cry "Hear!"

"I say!" calls out Mr. Woodward Clarke, "I'd come as close as you like if you were only one of the opposite sex, Dan, my dear boy."

"What's Mr. Duane doing here to-night anyway, I'd like to know?" inquires Fred Irving.

"He's married, and I thought this was a bachelor dinner!" chimes Gerald Knox.

"So it is!" exclaims the host, "but of course no bachelor dinner in town's complete without Billy, even if he is married."

"Fact!" affirms Satterlee. "You've been away too long, Freddie. You've got to learn that Billy is on top."

"Of everything?" asks Seaborough laughingly.

"To be sure. Elected Mayor; first gentleman we've had in that office in five centuries," remarks Tommy solemnly.

"Oh! hold on, 'five centuries'!" cries Gerald Knox.

"What'll I 'hold on' to?" asks Tommy.

"The truth, boy, if you can."

"Gad!" is the retort, "I've always held on to it so tight it couldn't breathe, I guess. To return to Billy, he's just the best all-around fellow that ever lived!"

"Endorsed!" cries Dan Satterlee.

"Endorsed!" cry all the men with a will.

And then Billy comes in and they have at him and seat him, and his first courses are fetched, and the talk runs on as is the custom at such a function.

Dick Peevor alone seems morose. He is thinking of Imogene and how their quiet little sub rosa marriage was done up without any "bachelor farewell dinner" or anyone knowing anything at all about it; and he wonders how soon literature will begin to pay, for Dick is a novelist and a playwright.

"I say," says Tommy, "soon as we get down to cigars I've a dancer to show you."

"Anything new?" inquires Seaborough languidly.

"Yes."

"Spanish?" asks Cecil Haven.

"No. Guess again."

"English? German? Brazilian? Italian? Cuban? French? Scotch? Irish?"

"No! no! no!" bawls the young host at each interrogation. "Syrian," he adds, nodding with self satisfaction.

"Oh? Syrian, eh?" Duane remarks slowly. "Where did you pick her up Tommy, son?"

"Never picked her up in my life!" replies "son" emphatically. "She weighs too much."

"De Barreaux's the man that I heard mention her first, isn't he?" asks Seaborough.

"Head of the class, my Lord," cries Tommy; "De Barreaux did present her to me."

"Was she his to make a present of?" asks Dan.

"Shut up," says Billy.

"Why?" asks Cecil. "Are there any women about?"

"Only those we may have in our minds," returns Duane with his fascinating smile: the smile that won to him friend or foe, opponent or adherent alike.

Just now it made Cecil Haven think of his mother and sister off in Devonshire, and did not cause him to hate the New Yorker in the least.

"By Jove!" he cries, touching his glass to Billy's, "you're right, sir."

Billy's eyes met the youngster's and he said, turning to Tommy:

"Who is De Barreaux, Tom, may I ask?"

And then the chorus rang out.

"De Barreaux! Don't you know who De Barreaux is?"

"Oh! Billy, not met De Barreaux?"

"Where have you been, Duane, for the past six weeks?" demands Lord Seaborough.

"In politics," is the succinct reply.

"Beg pardon," laughing with the Mayor-elect, "but I should have supposed Mrs. Duane must have met De Barreaux and would surely have mentioned him."

"I don't recall the name. Eckford, son, who is he? I am absolutely curious," Billy now says, pausing in his salad.

"He's the chap that can play the piano like no one else on earth; paints pictures; writes poems; dances exquisitely; best-dressed man on the street; judge of wines, horses, books, and——"

"Women!" adds Knox, finishing Tommy's eulogium for him.

"I don't know about that!" returns Eckford thoughtfully. "I only know he's the most fascinating devil I ever encountered out of petticoats."

"See here, Tom," exclaimed Duane, laughing and patting his future brother-in-law affectionately on the shoulder, "are you a boy or a girl raving over a man like that?"

"Oh, pshaw!" retorts the bridegroom-elect. "Clear you've never seen De Barreaux. He's coming to-night; you'll meet him; this is his chair"—planting a hand on the back of the left-hand seat.

"Why is he late?" Dickey asks.

"He's playing for some one or other for charity; turn up soon now, he puts up here you know. Hark boys, now here's my Syrian."

The tinkle of Eastern instruments; the glow of softened lights; the dark rich curtains at the far end of the room part showing a miniature stage improvised for the occasion. It is covered with a white carpet and the whole diminutive mise-en-scene is white without a fleck of color.

As the draperies fold aside the lights turned golden, and slowly swaying from side to side, the Syrian dancer slipped out from the wings.

As she swayed, by some novel and well-managed contrivance, the scene, both back-drop and wings, swayed with her, the very carpet beneath her feet billowed and rose and fell as she lifted and swung herself from side to side.

She was clad in dark greens and crimsons, blues and purples, all so blended and swathed into each other as to

make a perfect harmony; on her head the Eastern draperies of white, with nothing visible but the large deep, painted eyes.

In her hands she held a dove and she played with it, stroking, caressing, reprimanding, coaxing, scolding, kissing, tormenting it as she danced.

If dancing the motions could be called, since they were but a wonderful rhythmical swing, a twinkle and patter of the sandalled feet, a flutter of the mysterious head, a palpitating of the handsome throat, a tremulous perpetual agitation of the long hands with the dove.

The men held their breaths, rather; even the most blasé among them acknowledged that there was something new and unlike in this Syrian woman's movements.

It was an open enough secret wherein lay her fascination, but not one of them was clever enough to read it.

It was however revealed in her every curve and line of action. The Syrian woman was totally indifferent to the effect she might produce.

The men who watched her were not in any sense an appeal to her; she did not care if they liked her or not. At least if she did it was absent from her visible attitude.

The cigars were all out, except Duane's, when she had finished: they had all forgotten them but him.

There was a little pause when she stopped; the music stopped too.

Eckford for a second feared his entertainment had not hit the mark.

But the halt was only momentary and then Seaborough led the racket of applause.

Woodward Clarke rushed over to the dancer with his glass full of champagne and held it up to her where she stood leaning against the side-scene.

She shook her head.

Then Haven, and Seaborough, and Knox, and Satterlee, and Irving, and Leroy, and Eckford himself, and all

the rest of the fellows, in thronging turn, presented their glasses only to have each and all refused.

She would none of them.

"No wine?" cries the young host.

The Syrian woman pointed at Billy with her long handsome forefinger, and her eyes shone.

How they all laughed, shouted.

"Billy!"

"By Jupiter, she has good taste!" cried Satterlee; "the biggest man here and the only married one!"

At which poor Dickey Peevor whispered:

"Oh, no, he isn't!" to himself.

And Billy laughed good-humoredly when the shout went up.

He filled his glass and carried it over to her, and she drank it from his hand, not touching the thing with a finger-tip even to steady it.

Then when she had finished—for she swallowed the champagne in a leisurely way, the crowd of fellows watching, arrested in speech and laughter in spite of themselves—she took the pretty bit of crystal from him and dashed it to pieces on the floor of the little stage.

There was a pause—it was an awkward one although it was extremely brief—filled by Billy's own slightly perfunctory laugh, this taken up and echoed half-heartedly by the rest: they could not have told why; no more could he; the fact of the thing remained.

Then Dickey, in a spirit of mirth and essaying a joy he did not feel—no man with a secret marriage to a girl he adores on his mind, feels joyous among his fellows on the basis of the calling of unsuccessful literature—Dickey then attempted to remove the dancer's veiling apparatus, and the rest of the men at once raised a responsive hue and cry.

But Eckford interposed.

The condition that she made everywhere was that she

was not to be made to show her face; his word had been given and the boys must abide by it.

She understood English and kissed her hand in gratitude to her patron. Then, coaxing the dove close to her bosom, she walked over the fragments of Billy's wine-glass across the tiny stage and disappeared.

"I'll wager a double X!" exclaims Satterlee, "that De Barreaux has seen her face all the same!"

"Right you are, sir," answers Eckford. "She's one of his models. Rather fancy that's the way he came to discover her down in the quarter on Washington Street: he has set up a studio there!"

"Hello!"

A piano in the adjoining room touched by a master hand caused this ejaculation from the lips of Mr. Knox.

"Who is that playing?" Duane inquires, lazily watching the rings of smoke curl and break far above his head.

"De Barreaux!" exclaims the host triumphantly. "Did you ever hear such playing?" he whispers now and the men are all listening.

"It's not in my line," answers Duane, "but Marjorie would like to hear him; she is almost music-mad."

"There goes!" Eckford tossed his head as the pianist ceased suddenly. "You'll see, he won't eat a morsel, and he'll make you his sworn ally in no time."

Upon which cue the man called De Barreaux entered the room, and was greeted with warmth all around, haled up to Duane and introduced.

"De Barreaux, this is Mr. Claiborne Courtlandt Duane, the Mayor-elect of our town and the very best fellow in the world!" All this from Tommy pleasantly presentive, and continuing,

"Billy this is De Barreaux, you've heard enough of him this evening, I'm sure, to give him your hand."

But Billy did not give him his hand.

CHAPTER VIII

Two Who Had Met Before

HE stared at De Barreaux in a leisurely but not discourteous way, having risen and holding his cigar behind him.

The white curtains of the little stage at the other end of the room trembled and parted enough to admit the gaze of the Syrian woman's eyes just at this time; she stood there for a few moments and no one noticed her.

Billy bowed; then he said:

"I think I have met this gentleman before, or," he adds with distinct and gracious courtesy, fixing his eyes upon the newcomer, "have I not?"

There is that in his tone which leaves the choice loyally with the other man.

"Certainly you have!" exclaims De Barreaux. "I am indeed much pleased that you remember me."

"I do remember you," Duane says, sitting down now and resuming his smoke, indicating at the same time a chair and the Reina Victorias on the table. He said nothing further.

He had that marvellously quick intuition, safeguarded by as marvellous a discretion, which made him generally master of men and situations, of individuals and throngs alike.

Billy had also the ineffable, rare capacity of allowing other people to say things and of not attempting to say them all himself.

It was plain to Dan Satterlee, if not to any of the rest of the crowd, that from this very point Billy held De Barreaux at a certain if very slight disadvantage: it

was evident to Dan, who was a bit of a student of human nature, that De Barreaux would have preferred Duane to set the pace, and Duane had no mind to do it.

Duane was a man to let people set their own paces: if he didn't choose to follow suit, that was his lookout; he usually did though.

The hesitant movement with De Barreaux was a short one; he too possessed a vivid power of assimilation, and no crisis was likely to find him disarmed or unprepared: he was Latin too to the finger-tips and exquisitely graceful in his manner and speech.

"I am very glad," is his reply. "It is, you perceive," drawing a card from his case and holding it for a second before Duane's eyes, then replacing it in his pocket, "no longer Isidor Baer, but Isidoro De Barreaux."

Billy lifts his brows in polite interest.

"A harmonious and beautiful name is powerful with the public——"

Although the Syrian woman now withdrew from the curtains, most of the men were acutely listening to what De Barreaux was saying: it was news to all of them.

"When I went in for music and the arts as professions I did myself into French," he continues.

"A successful translation, I trust?" Duane replies urbanely.

"Extremely: the world has been good to me since——"

Here again there was a faint hesitation on the part of the latest comer, as if he were still waiting to see if the man he more particularly addressed would or would not fix the status of their previous acquaintance.

Evidently he had no such intention, therefore De Barreaux proceeded.

"—Since those days when we were at college together at Heidelberg."

"Oh!" cries Eckford in a relieved way, a mood shared by the lot.

"Were you and Mr. Duane chums at college? 'Pon honor, that's fine! Now," adds the youngster gleefully, "we can get at the facts about Billy as a Freshman, Under-grad and Senior!"

"De Barreaux!" sings out Mr. Knox, rapping on the table with both his be-ringed fists, "tell us what sort of a boy Duane was? What did Billy do?"

"What did Billy like?" says Irving.

"What did Billy say?" shouts the Hon. Cecil.

"How many duels did Billy fight, eh?" chime forth Messrs. Le Roy and Clarke.

"How did he make love?" exclaims Dickey Peavor, blushing at his own temerity.

"Ah that I cannot say" responds De Barreaux. "I was not ever present at those delightful times."

"Was he a gallant then? Did he go in for the girls? Come, tell us. You see Billy's having been at a German college," urges Mr. Eckford "puts him out of our reach. We're all Yale and Columbia and Princeton men!"

Whereupon each of the several alumni of these seats of learning present set up his own particular cry, with such an accompaniment of banging fists, pounding heels, clinking glasses as called in the astounded waiters from the palm garden and various private apartments to demand order and less noise.

"I say now, boys, one rousing yell for Tommy's last free days and then we'll settle down!" Lord Seaborough is the spokesman, and as he is the man who is going to see the bridegroom "through it" his proposition is hailed with delight. "They can't object to just one more yell," he urges; "if they do I'll go in and tell each of 'em it's a bachelor's last chance at using his lungs in company with his masculine friends. Now, boys, do your best."

They did: although many of the guests of the Waldorf called it something else.

As the shout was lowering, there came across the air

from the adjoining room, where the piano was, a muffled hum of voices—women's voices—a swishing of silks, a smothered laugh, the click of an opening fan.

And all the men sprang to their feet and were instantly silent.

"That's Imo— I mean that is certainly Miss Propper's voice!" exclaims Dickey.

It certainly was Imogene and Dolly, haled along by their mother, who appeared as the chaperone of the party, with Jack Stowe in her wake; Sally, hanging rather in the background, but her seven bridesmaids, Jessie Pomeroy, Ethel Fish, Gertrude De Wint, Jean Hollister, Betty Davies, Carolyn Ward, and Phyllis Van Antwerp decidedly to the front.

"Well, dear fellows!" said Mrs. Propper, "Sally told me she was tired of farewell bachelor dinners and she determined to be the first to make the innovation. You men may as well succumb, the girls have come for a dance and they mean to have it."

With which the seven bridesmaids whipped silken sashes from their hiding-places and proceeded to lasso the men into line; the table was quickly rolled aside, the chairs set a-row, the music started on a two-step, Jack Stowe bid to lead with Sally, and as lively a cotillon inaugurated as the season had to show.

Mrs. Propper contrived it so that Imogene and Seaborough should have any number of chances to themselves, and so clever was she that she got the pair installed in an alcove to sit out a figure under plea of Imogene's being "much too fagged and tired to dance any more!"

Imogene therefore sat down with Seaborough in attendance, fanning her, watched by Dickey's jealous eyes, and in turn Seaborough watching Dolly Propper walking through the dance with no less a personage than De Barreaux.

Duane was not dancing.

"Lord Seaborough," said Imogene brusquely, "pray

leave off fanning me and go anywhere you please. Mama is altogether mistaken about my being tired and I'd much rather be alone!"

"Ah now, Miss Imogene," began the young man lamely, his glance still pursuing Dolly.

"Oh! cried his companion, "please go. I know you want to be with my sister, and I'd much rather you would, please!"

"Come now, really, Miss Imogene. I do admire Miss Dolly immensely, but Mrs. Propper won't let me go near her!"

"Yes, I know it, and she insists on putting you near me. I could kill mama for throwing me at you like this!" Imogene is now like to burst into tears, and her attendant cavalier is frightened to death: the poor fellow fears—such have been his experiences—that she is about to tell him that she cares for him.

"I say now, for heaven's sake, don't; don't, Miss Imogene; I'm awfully sorry, 'pon honor I am!"

"Are you indeed! What for?" she inquires, scenting the peculiar attitude of his mind.

The blunt question is rather difficult to answer and Lord Seaborough, who is a gentleman, a nobleman, and the possessor of an unlimited fortune, doesn't quite know how to reply to it. He takes refuge in silence; but with eloquent eyes and actually blushing.

"See here," Imogene says, beginning to laugh, which much reassures him, "see here, I do believe you think I am seconding my mother's motion, and that I would like to be Countess of Seaborough; is it so?"

Just heaven! what an extraordinary affair a woman can be, to be sure, when she happens to be an American. His Lordship blushed more deeply. He felt someway that he was going to be made a very complete fool of.

"Oh, by Jove, what an idea!" he at last managed to say.

"Now," continued Imogene, quite as if he had made no sound, "the fact is—first of all, can I trust you?"

"With what?" he inquires, somewhat cautiously.

"A secret," says the girl.

"Lord! yes, yes!" he cries earnestly; quite informing her by his tone that he had expected the trust to be none other than herself.

Imogene laughs again merrily, and thereby stabs Dickey, who is trying to guide his partner as close to Seaborough and his charge as he dares.

"Sure?" queries Imogene, enjoying the situation.

"Perfectly, on my honor," returns the Englishman.

"It's a love secret," murmurs Imogene, willing, nay, eager, to terrify him if she can.

"Good gad!" cries he under his breath. "Don't! don't!" fully positive now that a crucial moment has arrived and very much tempted to run away from it.

"Oh, but I must," insists Imogene, laying a finger-tip or two on his arm. "You have promised and the secret must be told."

"Tell it to someone else, do!" he urges, looking pitiously about as if for aid.

"No one else on earth must hear it, can know it," persists she, revelling in his torment and anticipating his coming flouting.

"Well, then," he answers resignedly, staring down at his boots, and still feeling the detaining pressure of her hand upon his coat sleeve.

"We must work together!" she says.

"Must we?" he asks, blankly.

"Yes, you love some one; so do I."

Lord Seaborough swept his hand across his brow and wondered what the deuce he had ever crossed the ocean for anyway.

"You are free," Imogene continues.

"Oh, am I?" he cries blithely and hopefully.

"Aren't you?" she asks in dismay.

"I—I suppose so. I hope so."

"I am not." Imogene sighs, wilfully looking at him from under her lashes.

Well now, you know, this was too much. What should he do? Kiss her? Put his arms around her? A fellow could not treat a woman like a brute and be less kind on an occasion of this sort.

Before he could do anything, however, she said in a whisper:

"The secret is, Lord Seaborough, I am married already!"

"Thank heaven!" he ejaculates fervently, and then he jumps up with such an expression of gladness and contrition combined as caused Mrs. Propper, who was keeping tally of the whole affair, to feel sure he had proposed and been accepted.

"Yes, I knew you would be pleased," she says, laughing and indicating that he may sit down again. "My mother doesn't know it—would murder me if she did. I am Dickey Peevor's wife."

"I say, by George, now, I congratulate you, I mean him—I would say both of you!"

"Thank you," says Imogene. "The reason I have told you is, primarily, to give you a lesson; secondly, because we can help each other. You are at Dolly's feet. Dolly is a child in years; mama is trying to make a woman of her: Dolly is mature. I like you, so does Dolly, but nothing earthly would ever make the Child acknowledge it. She is perverse to a degree. I'd like to help you with your affair if you'll just help Dickey and me a bit now and then."

"With all my heart! Just tell me how, and you'll see."

"Well, give in to mama's plans and submit to her assumption that you are after me. I'll soon turn you over to Dolly, and at the same time," falters the unsuspected

bride, "you can give Dickey and me many a little chance to speak to each other. Don't you see?"

"Clearly, I appreciate the confidence, will respect it to the end; and, by Jove, you know, I do think that little sister of yours the dearest girl ever made."

"I know you do!" says Imogene, exchanging a glance with her surreptitious husband, which informs him he may approach without fear.

The cotillon was finished by three o'clock.

Then Tommy said they needed food, of which they partook.

Billy had gone home.

When he reached there he found that Mrs. Duane had just been summoned by telephone to the Waldorf party and had a moment ago left the house for that destination.

He started back, therefore, himself.

As he came into the room he saw them mostly all sitting about, eating and drinking, except De Barreaux, who stood.

Marjorie had evidently just arrived, for Tommy was saying:

"We couldn't do without you! Couldn't let the party break up without my future sister-in-law! Sally wouldn't listen to it, either; none of us would, and you'd promised faithfully to come after the opera was over, Billy said so."

"I know I did, but I was so tired."

De Barreaux came forward toward her.

Marjorie saw him.

Billy saw the blood rush to her face and the pallor succeed it; saw the regal calm that was hers on occasions settle upon her whole demeanor.

"Mrs. Duane, let me present my friend Mr. De Barreaux to you—Mr. Isidoro De Barreaux, musician, artist, author——"

"My dear sir," remonstrates De Barreaux as Tommy is proceeding.

He bows over her hand, and with the exquisite, delicate grace of the Latin touches it lightly with his lips.

Duane would have mightily liked to kill him then and there.

No matter how deep set the civilization, or perhaps because of its depth, the surer the recoil to elementary principles on elementary provocation.

"It is an honor to me to meet Mrs. Duane," De Barreaux says, prisoning her beautiful eyes in his.

She smiles and inclines her head.

She is quite well used to speeches of the kind; has been all her life meeting and mingling with courtly men—yet never before has she really met this man, or any other of quite his calibre or influence.

Billy walked forward beside her. She looked up at him.

"Mr. De Barreaux," she said quickly, "let me introduce you and Mr. Duane. Mr. Duane, Mr. Isidore De Barreaux."

Billy smiled.

"Mr. De Barreaux and I were at college together in Heidelberg, my dear," he says, nodding to the other man.

"And Madame is your wife? Ah, I see! I see!" De Barreaux exclaims. "I did not catch at the fact at first."

There is a curious contractive expression of pain on his face: then it is succeeded by a glow of pleasure, joy—a joy so palpable as to be almost ferocious.

Marjorie turns away.

"Madame is very beautiful," the musician says, very beautiful!"

Billy made no reply.

He was trying to make up his mind whether Marjorie and De Barreaux had ever met before, when it occurred

to him that the simple and natural method of discovery would be to ask.

"You have met Mrs. Duane before this evening, have you not, De Barreaux?" he inquires easily and with affirmative assumption in his tone.

"I have not had the great pleasure of being presented to Mrs. Duane until now," returns the other.

But Billy did not believe him.

He had a large fund of ready disbelief for the word of any Jew that lived, which may have been the main reason for his discredit now.

He would ask Marjorie.

Nonsense! he would do nothing of the kind. Yes, by Jove, he would!

He fetched her some ices and cakes and held her chocolate cup for her just as he used to do long ago before they were married.

"I say, Marjie," he finally put it, "did you ever meet this musician before?"

CHAPTER IX

Face to Face with the Past

WHATEVER Mrs. Duane's answer might have been, Mr. Duane never heard it.

Just at this juncture Mrs. Propper announced that it was morning.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed her youngest daughter; "it's not mourning, it's rejoicing at the prospect of that which delights mama's soul, a wedding."

And while everybody laughed good-naturedly, everybody at the same time concluded it was about time to break up and get home for a snatch of sleep.

The women were all chattering in one anteroom, getting into their wraps and hoods; the men were in another, with two exceptions, Billy Duane, who had not worn a raglan, and carried his hat in his hand, and De Barreaux, who put up at the Waldorf.

"Mr. Duane," said the latter, "you are not too glad to meet me again, are you?"

"I am indifferent," answers Billy, with a smile, knocking his hat into shape.

"No," said the other, with a certain air of authority. "No one is indifferent to me. It is impossible. I am not a person of that quality. Pouf! I know it."

Billy was silent, and his attitude and expression conveyed nothing; an irritating but commanding position if one is able to take it.

"Do you remember Fatima?" inquires De Barreaux slowly.

Mr. Duane inclines his head as slowly.

"The Syrian girl in Heidelberg, whom you took away from me?"

Mr. Duane nods again with a blankness of expression worthy of a sphinx.

"I loved her," says De Barreaux, his beautiful teeth showing well as he bit in his underlip.

Mr. Duane sighs, merely as a physical outlet without mental indication.

"So did you," continues the Polish Hebrew.

Mr. Duane now looked squarely at his companion.

"Now just look here," said the American, in a pleasant, conversational way, "you will be good enough to leave my past where I've left it—in oblivion, will you?"

There was a strong hint of rage and a strong threat of trouble to come in the voice of the Mayor-elect, should his wishes not chance to be complied with.

"Ah!" exclaimed the other, becoming at once brilliant and keen now that he had roused his opponent; he shrugged his shoulders, and smiled with perfect affability.

"How, then, is it possible for me to ignore Mr. Duane's past when it was so irremediably mingled with my own?"

"You heard what I said?" remarks Billy quietly.

"Oh, yes," returns De Barreaux, his slight accent more emphatic as he became more interested or excited, whichever it was. "I heard you very excellently; but, you see, I am a fair fighter; I do not strike from the rear or from an ambush or without warning."

"What are you talking about?" Duane exclaims testily, as if weary of the whole thing.

"Just this," is De Barreaux's answer. "When Fatima was taken from me by you, I ran over to your chambers and swore to you I'd get even with you some day."

"Very well," Duane says, "I told you to go ahead, didn't I?"

"Yes."

"Well, have you evened it up yet?"

"Ah—h—no, but I warn you, by God!" The alien whispers it with a curious un-Latin and very Saxon matter-of-factness in his words.

"By God!" he reiterates, "I will be even yet."

Duane looked at him.

A dozen thoughts flashed through his brain. Modern, average American that he was, murder was one of his thoughts.

Curiously enough, too, murder was precisely what struck through the other man's brain at the same instant.

"Did you see the Syrian dancer Eckford had in to entertain his friends this evening?" now inquired De Barreaux.

Duane was still looking at him and did not reply at once.

De Barreaux duplicated the look: it was square, unrelenting, uncompromising, a magnificent candor on the one side met by as superb a subtlety on the other.

"Yes, I saw the dancing," Duane ejaculates.

"That was Fatima—our Fatima."

Billy's eyebrows lift.

"No," returns the other, answering the expression, "she will not look at me even now, although she is one of my models for painting. She is quite faithful to you after the lapse of—how many years is it, nine?"

"Eight," Duane corrects in a business-like tone.

"Billy, I'm going home!" calls out Marjorie. "If you don't care to come yet, Tommy and Sally will give me a lift in their trap, and I'll leave the auto for you!"

Both men start toward her a bit as she now turns away for some more parting words with Imogene, who was indeed a very great friend of hers.

"I have received Mrs. Duane's permission to call upon her," De Barreaux speaks with all the sweet, fluent melody of his most charming manner; "may I hope that you will not veto her graciousness?"

Again they looked straight into each other's eyes, and each was as thoroughly conversant with the other's thoughts as if he had set it forth in the plainest language from the highest house-top in the town.

In just that one second the whole thing sped through Billy Duane's brain.

Then he laughed, not too much nor too little, nor any way but naturally and good-humoredly and said,

"Why should I?" waiting for the reply which not coming frequently causes many questions to lose their purpose entirely.

De Barreaux started uneasily and smiled in deprecation.

"Oh, I don't know, I——"

Billy did not offer any assistance but stood calmly waiting.

"I may then come?" asks the musician.

"Certainly!" says Duane heartily.

"My dear fellow, you are melodramatic. You always were, if I remember aright. Mrs. Duane is at home on Tuesdays. Good-night to you."

CHAPTER X

Dolly Enlightens His Lordship

THE wedding came off with a fine flourish, and it was admitted on all sides that never had the sun shone on a prettier bride—to be sure, it got no chance to shine on her at all, as the ceremony took place in the evening—never had so many satin slippers alighted on top of a coach; so much rice been flung into one; such presents been received; such a mob of people been in evidence both at church and reception, or any bridegroom had to wait as long at the altar for his prize.

The Tuesday after, everyone reported at Mrs. Duane's to talk it over, a lot of men dropping in toward six, when by chance, of course, Mrs. Propper and Jack Stowe met on the stoop of the Madison Avenue house.

Dick and Imogene were already in—the latter in O'Leary's latest inspiration, and setting it off to the admiration and envy of half the women present.

"Jack!" cried Mrs. Propper, "I've got some good news for you, dear," this as they went up the steps together.

"You've seen your lawyer?" Stowe asks eagerly.

"Yes, and he says he thinks—thinks, mind you—that in about a month I'll be quite free!"

"Another month!" groans Stowe.

"You horrid fellow! I thought you'd be glad."

"I am! Jove! glad isn't the word. But it's such a deuced wait, Cora. Please remember I've been waiting for—when was Imogene born?—in 188—"

"Hush!" she exclaims as if the stone steps had ears.

"Dates are something I won't allow mentioned in my presence."

"Oh," he groans, "and I've just sent you a five-pound box of stuffed ones to eat while you were reading 'Beverley.'"

"There's one date I'd like to eat," she exclaims with a vicious little move.

"Which one is that?" inquires her adorer.

"Date of my birth!" and, laughing both, they trip gayly into Marjorie's drawing-room.

"Now, Miss Imogene!" whispered Seaborough, beholding the entrance, "there's Mrs. Propper, and here's your chance!"

His Lordship stood at the far end of the tea-room, the third of the suite, and with his back to the piano, which was cornerwise. With one shoulder push he wheeled the instrument slightly aside, making a narrow passageway into the triangular hiding-space behind it, and with a dexterous and simultaneous movement Imogene slipped in and Dick Peavor after her with a grateful glance at the provider of this shelter.

"I say," whispers Dickey, *en route* to his paradise, "Seaborough, you'll mount guard and notify us when we can come out unobserved, won't you?"

"All right, old man," responds the Earl. "Nobody's noticing your exit, and I'll answer for your return to ordinary social usages!"

"At last!" says Dickey, ecstatically, kissing his wife as she crouches close up in the corner in the shelter.

"Hush—h!" cries Imogene. "Someone will surely hear you!" as the kiss is repeated.

"Too busy with themselves, my honey girl. I say, Im, I haven't kissed you in a fortnight; not since we drove home from Tommy's dinner in the trap with your respected mama—and it was so late she fell asleep. Do you remember?" Repetition of kiss.

"Be quiet." Kiss is encored.

"Dickey, some one's going to play or sing. Do you think they can see us?"

"No," valorously. "Let 'em sing and play, too!"

They do.

Kisses have it all their own way behind that piano.

Just about then Dolly came in for some tea, and Seaborough straightway forgot all about his charges behind the piano, and made for her direct, seeing that her mother was not yet at hand.

He was holding her plate for her, however, when Mrs. Propper hove in sight.

"Oh, Lord Seaborough, where is Imogene?"

"Now, Mrs. Propper," exclaimed his Lordship, with wide, clear eyes, "that I couldn't say."

"Haven't you seen her? She certainly is here. Mrs. Duane says she came in with Mr. Peevor half an hour ago!" severely.

"Did she now? Well, 'pon honor, Mrs. Propper, I don't see Miss Imogene anywhere about, do you?"

"No," returned the matron, "I don't."

"You see," said Seaborough to Dolly, as Mrs. Propper turned away, "your sister is here only your mama can't find her!"

"Where is she?" asked the Child.

"No matter about her, so long as I can be near you."

"Don't," she remarks with the weary inflection of twenty-five in its seventh season, "I don't want you near me. I am a child, and I wish to remain one as long as I can."

"You are an adorable young woman!" he says hotly.

"Oh, bother!" cries she. "Mama wishes you to marry Imogene. Would you like to?"

"No," he answers. "I would not."

"I thought as much. No fellow could want to marry either of us, I should think."

"What are you talking about? I've asked you to marry me!"

"Oh, that was folly, caprice. But to really wish one of mama's daughters for a wife would argue horrible taste on the man's part."

"God bless my soul! Why?" he asks seriously, staring at the small face with its large eyes and wistful, unworldly little mouth, and strangely shrewd outlook.

"Because," she says, "my papa ran away with Mrs. Townsend; Mr. Townsend had run away from her just three months after they were married; and mama is getting her divorce now, you know, and just as soon as she gets it she is going to marry Mr. Stowe."

"I see," ejaculated his Lordship, who was tolerably familiar with these bits of personal history, yet had never quite expected to hear them succinctly rehearsed by the little girl beside him.

"Papa and Mrs. Townsend ran off to Peru, and each of them got some sort of a left-handed divorce somewhere, and a magistrate in Honduras married them," Dolly proceeds.

"Papa doesn't do anything for mama nor for us. I was taken from school a year ago, when I was fourteen, and Imogene—she is society show-girl for O'Leary, the dressmaker, you know."

"I know," nods his Lordship wistfully. He would like to take the little girl off and away straight in his arms to a parson and have her made his.

"I want to go to school," Dolly says. "A real school, you see, not like Miss Harding's, where nothing was thought of but being smartly gowned; I think maybe Mr. Stowe will send me when once he and mama strike it off between them."

"I'll send you to school, Dolly, if you'll run off with me," whispers Seaborough.

"Oh, no," she replies, "Imogene and I are both utterly impossible as wives unless some nobody or other might take us up. I am sure!" with an imperious up-

lift of the handsome little blonde head, "no man whom I would marry would ever marry me."

"My dear, my darling, little girl!" whispers the young man recklessly, noting the tears that are so near rising in the sweet eyes, lowering beneath the gaze of his own, "you must not, shall not say such things to me."

"It's quite awkward for us, too, sometimes," she proceeds, pretending not to notice his explosion. "We all move in the same set and are likely to encounter each other any time at all. There! What have I been telling you? Look!" She nods her head toward a man and woman who have just entered together.

"That's my father now with his new wife!"

"But your mama is speaking to the er—the wife!" exclaims Seaborough incredulously.

"To be sure!" replies the Child quietly. "Mama's game, I tell you! She always vowed she'd do it when they met, and she's done it. I don't approve of mama at all, I don't believe in divorce, but I must admit she is as plucky as they make them."

"She is!" Lord Seaborough admits it, too, as he beholds the affable meeting of this trio and notes the exquisitely light and breezy manner in which the first Mrs. Propper lines up to her former husband and his present partner.

Everyone nearly in the room was looking on and Mrs. Propper knew it; therefore she was more than usually happy in her methods, and Jack Stowe fell a-worshipping her with more ardor than ever.

It all depends on the point of view.

Seaborough, in his amazement at Dolly's summing-up, had quite forgotten Imogene and Dickey.

When the musician had quitted the instrument he had caught his boot-tip in the pedals and, in extricating it, stooped, leaning on the piano with such a will as wheeled it violently and almost tightly square up against—well,

it ought to have been the wall—but it was Imogene and Dickey.

The husband spread his palms to repulse and meet the enemy, the wife almost shrieked aloud; the result was the pair was wedged there and dared not stir, for by this time the third room was crowded.

“Seaborough must come back soon,” says Imogene faintly.

“Damn Seaborough!” whispers Dickey. “If I could think him such a cad I’d believe he got us in here just for a lark.”

“Never!” says Imogene.

“Well,” says Dick, “so long as I’m with you, dearest.”

“And it’s not often we are together!” murmurs she. “The only thing is if I crush this gown O’Leary’ll go mad. She hoped by my wearing it here today to get at least three new customers. I promised her a word to some new people I met the other day from Ohio.”

“Damn O’Leary too!” whispers Dickey with feeling. “Imogene, if this new play is only taken, then you’ll only wears gowns that I pay for, and we’ll have a flat of our own.”

“Dear,” says she, as a dowager weighing at the least two hundred pounds leans against the easy-rolling piano, “if we stop here much longer we’ll each have a flat, a complete flat, to ourselves!”

“I’ll fire out, find Seaborough and pommel him!” cries Dickey irately.

“You’ll do nothing of the kind! If you were to show up now what would become of us? No, we must stop until——”

“Doomsday, apparently.”

Seaborough having by this persuaded Dolly into a slightly softened frame of mind, had, it is true, entirely forgotten Imogene and her secret spouse.

CHAPTER XI

One of Mrs. Duane's Tuesdays

HILARITY is at its height.

There are so many people that there is little use for a hostess, and it is that enviable state of crush when the mistress of the salon can begin to enjoy herself in the full confidence that all her guests are happy and not occupying themselves in the remotest degree with her.

All—except the exceptional ones.

Marjorie, brilliant, radiant, beautiful, stood near the mantel in the front drawing-room; Dan Satterlee was beside her. They were old chums, had grown up part way together save that she was his junior by some eight or ten years.

The two were really friends, which is a questionable statement when it comes to man and woman, but the exceptions like this only the more surely prove the rule of the otherwise.

"Dan," she said, "you're a trump!"

"If I am it's only the deuce," he says.

"Very next card to the ace!" she laughs. "I am so much in your debt for fetching that delicious Alderman to me from the—what ward is it?"

"Seventh," replies Mr. Satterlee promptly. "What do you want with the Alderman, anyway? And this fellow's term expires January first, just when Billy takes the oath."

"Oh, but it's an ignoramus!" cries she. "Mr. Michael McGuire is reelected, my dear boy! I read the papers. There isn't a scrap of municipal news or gossip that I haven't at my finger-tips."

"You! You who would never touch a paper even to read the accounts of your own frocks and horses! Marjorie, why is this?"

"You must promise, 'pon honor, not to tell Billy?" she says, smiling, but withal very much in earnest.

"Certainly not, if you wish it."

"I am going to help him."

"You! How, by Jove?"

"Lots of ways. You don't suppose Billy's going to be satisfied with the Mayoralty, do you?" she asks, with a too evident scorn of that civic honor.

"No, I suppose not: in any event his party are not going to be satisfied with it for him," replies the private secretary with decision.

"Aha! I am correct, then. The next thing in order should be Albany, should it not?" she hesitates. "Not Washington? A United States Senator rarely reaches the White House," she says, looking at her companion.

"It's Albany," responds Satterlee with similar alacrity.

"Oh, it's settled, is it?" she asks. "Your tone is a cut and dried one."

"Yes, that is the proposed move."

"It's never a walk-over, is it?" she asks.

"Hardly, and it will be a big fight this next time," is the answer.

"I am glad of it!" she cries.

"Why?"

"Because then my assistance will be of value."

"Marjorie! What can you do?"

"Begin at once; it is not too soon. I have already begun. I called upon Mrs. Michael McGuire yesterday, and she is due here next Tuesday."

"But she lives in the Bowery!" exclaims Satterlee, in consternation, "over her husband's liquor saloon!"

"Don't I know it, dear boy! I tell you I was there yesterday, and met all the children; there are seven."

"But Marjorie, Billy would not like that sort of thing." Mr. Satterlee is voicing his own sentiments in connection with his own womenkind under similar circumstances.

"Remember your promise, Dan," she says seriously. "I am bound to help Billy; I must take my own way to do it. The social lever is the only one a woman in my position—or any position, for that matter—can wield. I tell you," she says tensely, her large eyes sparkling and the red rushing to her cheeks in a warm and beautiful flood. "I have thought it all out. I can help him and I will; and in helping him I shan't hurt anyone and may help them, too." She laughs now as she notes Dan's expression of amazement.

"Oh, save your astonishment. I'm sending the Shetlands over to the Bowery Sunday afternoon to take the little McGuires up to the Park—an outing. Two of them are sick!"

"'Pon my soul!" Mr. Satterlee would fain have whistled a lively air, but fortunately didn't.

"You're—pardon me, Marjie—a brick!"

"Of what—ice-cream?" she says gayly.

"Ah, you know what I mean. You've struck the right note, by Jupiter. We expected a lot of trouble with that McGuire faction. You see, his brother-in-law, Feeny, is just elected from the Sixth, and between them and the Parley Brothers, the contractors, there's a big deal on for the widening of Fifty-ninth Street."

"Oh, I know it," she says quietly.

"You do? How?"

"Mrs. McGuire told me all about it, and, indeed, she couldn't help it, for downstairs in the saloon, under her parlor, her husband and his friends were discussing it all through my visit."

"Billy will veto that bill as sure as his name is Duane," remarks Dan, looking Mrs. Duane squarely and tentatively in the face.

"Certainly," is the reply. "But trust me and the Shetlands and a few other things to kill McGuire's fight for the appropriation, and to win him over to the better side."

"Wonderful little woman. Billy ought to know, by Jove!" he cries with enthusiasm.

"Never! At least," noting the man's surprise, "not for a long, long time. I want you to help me, though."

"Command me. You are able for it," he adds with vivid admiration.

"I am planning a Thanksgiving festival for the operatives up the river at our mills, and I am going to invite all the mill-hands from the Hull-Taylor Mills across the river to come, too. Henry Hull has got his eyes on the Capitol at Albany, too."

"You know that, Marjie! and Hull is just the darkest horse the Democrats have in their stable. How did you discover it?"

"By pure accident. I called on a little Western woman, the other day, who is stopping at a queer little hotel in Eleventh Street—the St. Stephen I think it's called. I had to wait a quarter of an hour for her. Two men and a woman were at the other end of the room. I thought the men looked like politicians, although they lacked sense, talked quite loudly, and mentioned each other's names—Hull and Schroeder."

"The chairman of the Democratic Club."

"Precisely, and you can't imagine with what frank consideration for my thirst for knowledge they went into the whole scheme. Mrs. Hull is a shrewd woman, too; she made valuable suggestions. It's to be a deal with the Parleys; they are putting up the money and expect to get it back with two hundred per cent. interest on concessions for new railroads and contracts for new and unnecessary public buildings in Albany!"

"Great Scott!" cried Satterlee. "Hull has taken time by the forelock, hasn't he?"

"He has," replied Marjorie. "And Sunday afternoon the little McGuires will take the Shetlands by the fetlocks, and, well," she falters a little now and leans back in her chair, "we shall see," she finishes, rising.

It was all out of her line, but within her capacity; out of joint with her tastes and predilections, in touch with her possibilities.

Ignored by her husband in his plans and ambitions, restless, uneasy, absolutely needing something to interest, amuse, take her out of herself, she seized upon that which first presented itself, and shortly discovered that she was equal to it and likely to prove a powerful factor in his public career, entirely unknown to and unsuspected by him.

Imogene and Dickey meantime remained behind that upright piano. It was an awful hour that the young husband and wife put in. At last Imogene said:

"Dickey, I shall faint away."

"No, you sha'n't!" returns he, manfully, peeping coyly over the top of the instrument.

There were but few people left in the room now: the perfidious Seaborough was one of them, still talking to Dolly. Mrs. Proper was there, too, but she seemed to be oblivious of her younger daughter, or had resigned herself to the Earl's attentions in one direction as well as another so long as the family kept a nobleman attached.

By dint, probably, of personal magnetism, Mr. Peevor caught the attention of Lord Seaborough, and straightway shook his fist threateningly over at that gentleman, motioning vigorously with the other hand to him to take Mrs. Proper away.

Mrs. Proper, however, was evidently alive to personal magnetism, too, for she looked and beheld Dickey's frantic appeals.

"Dickey Peevor!" exclaimed she, in tones of amazement. "What is the matter with him? Look! He's certainly gone mad!"



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Then everybody looked.

"What's the trouble?" says Seaborough calmly, crossing the room and sticking his glass nonchalantly in his eye. "Not found that locket you lost yet, Peevor?" edging the piano back cornerwise so that Dickey can emerge and Imogene breathe once more.

"No, I have not," replies the one addressed in the tone of a dragoon major.

"Oh, Mr. Peevor, did you lose your locket?" exclaims Dolly. "Why, what a pity!"

"There's your locket, Mr. Peevor, hanging to your chain quite as usual!" says Mrs. Propper severely, as she leans against one side of the piano, while Imogene quivers on the other.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Propper, but that is not the locket which Mr. Peevor lost." This from the Earl.

"I presume not!" interrupts the matron with emphasis.

"Your sister is behind that piano!" whispers Seaborough to Dolly. "It was a very particular locket which Mr. Peevor wore—ahem—between his flannels and his——"

"That is sufficient!" exclaims Mrs. Propper. "Mr. Peevor seems too exhausted to speak for himself, but possibly he can summon strength enough to tell me where Miss Propper is?"

"I only wish I could!" remarks Dickey, with a sickly grin at Seaborough.

"Imogene, mama?" cries Dolly. "Oh, I know precisely where Imogene is!"

"Where?" asks the mother, still with an apparently fascinated gaze upon the piano.

"She's gone into the front drawing-room to speak to papa!" Dolly was always good for a rouser.

At this Mrs. Propper and everyone else, the ingenious Child included, left the room, except Dickey Peevor and Lord Seaborough—and Imogene.

"I could shoot you!" says Dickey.

"I know it. I'd willingly help you in the good work. Dearest boy, I am a cad, a ruffian, a fool!"—rolling the piano a little from the wall.

"Come out, Miss Imogene! and here, run past us quickly, out of this door into the library and so make your way up the back staircase, and then down the front one! Go it!" He slipped his arm around her to assist her.

Imogene came out without a word.

Just at that instant her mama, who had discovered that she was not in the front drawing-room at all, returned and witnessed the Earl's arm and its position.

She stepped up and took hold of her daughter while the two men stood still, out-generalled and limp.

She led Imogene across to the hall.

"Lost locket!" she cries peevishly. "Peavor must care for you if he is willing to lie like that for the other man. You and Seaborough were behind that piano?"

Imogene was silent, struggling with her mirth.

"Never mind; you need only answer me one thing. Did you accept him?"

Imogene shook her head.

"What!" the mother almost screamed.

"Not yet," the girl said, half choking.

"Oh, it's just as well to be a bit coy, but for heaven's sake make it possible for me to announce your engagement before my own marriage takes place. If I can be the mother-in-law of the richest Earl in England no one can snub me."

"I only wish you could," replies Imogene cheerfully.

And Mrs. Propper goes back for a glass of claret-cup and to smile upon both his Lordship and poor Dickey, who have had it out over the punch-bowl and are now both beaming.

While Mrs. Propper was thus looking after the world-

ly prospects of her offspring at one end of the house, the mistress of it, it may be recalled, had just risen from her seat at the other.

She saw De Barreaux enter and her hand was in his before the butler could announce him. Indeed, that personage, instantly recognizing by his mistress's attitude that this guest was *persona grata* from the start, forbore to announce him at all. Hence his arrival created no stir and the crowd was unaware of a fresh celebrity in its midst.

She sat down again on the little tête-à-tête sofa, and replied to the question of his eyes by a soft indicative motion of her hand.

He sat down, too, beside her, just as Billy entered the house.

The man at the door took his master's hat and coat, and Billy, fresh and splendid-looking from the keen, sharp wind, was stepping briskly into the drawing-room, as was his frequent custom of a Tuesday, when the delicate, intense picture of those two sitting there together, oblivious of his presence, or, indeed, seemingly of anyone's, caused him to halt.

CHAPTER XII

Gordon King's Way

"You see I have come," De Barreaux says. "Have I ventured too soon?"

"By no means," is the reply; and he is so facile, so in touch with her from the very foundation that he exclaims in answer to her thought.

"Dare I believe that Madame would not have been displeased had I come in last week or the one before even?"

"I should not have been displeased. Certainly not," she replies graciously, but with a perfect balance in her tones, the well-bred ease of a woman too thoroughly acclimated to the most zealous and subtle flattery to be moved by any novel exhibition of it.

His slow eyes, like violets in their strange color, took in with equanimity her intense and lovely face.

"Why did Madame so cruelly disappoint me and leave Triborg before I could return?"

"Triborg?" she echoes, while her brows contract. "Triborg? Were you at Triborg?" Marjie does not like the assumption. She thinks he should have permitted that mention to have been hers, if it indeed were to be anyone's.

"Must I forget it?" he asks in a pleading voice.

She shrugs her shoulders. Audacity in some men is adorable; in others it is unbearable. It does not accord with a flamelike and spiritual physique; it jars.

Marjorie hated discords. She looked quite away from him.

He was both pained and surprised at the attitude. Women habitually liked him and his ways.

"I wish to tell you some things, may I?" he asks gently.

"To be sure, if you like."

"It would be natural for you to think that I had seen you many times before that evening when I was so presumptuous as to speak to you at Triborg?" Mrs. Duane inclined her head a very little.

"I had never seen you until that moment when I rose from the piano. I rose because it was my tribute to your presence. I had always been looking for you all over the habitable world."

Marjorie laughed.

"Ah, Mr. De Barreaux, I see you write and are therefore forever seeking inspiration—or copy?"

He makes no reply at once.

There is a pause, and she glances at his face—so pale, so calm, so almost stern; now turned sideways, resembling a beautiful cameo.

"You are well aware that what you say is not so. Well, I saw you. I made up my mind I must speak with you. I did so. I went away to Mainz to play at a concert or two with but one thought in my mind, one goal in my brain. I returned; you were not there. I did not inquire, I did not even ask your name or your destination."

Mrs. Duane now regards her companion with a degree more of interest.

"I knew that I should be guided to you. I was. I knew that you needed me."

Her eyes blaze, but this produces no effect upon him. He goes on in the same placid, even, almost commonplace voice, utterly commonplace save for the note of prophecy, the note of fatalism that sounds quite through it—the curious, refraining sound that is never very aloof from a Hebrew's earnest moods.

"I understand and comprehend you," he continues, "I know what you require; some day you will let me

put into my music what I am not clever enough to put into your language."

"Is not my language, then, yours too?" she asked, subdued, soothed, passive all at once beneath this new influence.

"I am a Pole, Madame, by birth, a cosmopolitan by custom and travel, an American from choice." He bows.

She inclines her head and smiles.

"You were very weary when I entered?" he observed, regarding her closely.

"Yes," she assented, experiencing all the piercing delight of having her smallest moods noted by one who is paramourly sympathetic.

"But now you are rested a little?" he inquires smiling.

"Yes, much rested," she exclaims.

"I have rested you," he asserted. "Ah, but I have. It is as if you had been walking for a while in a new garden where all things were fresh and fair with dew and early morning lights; is it not so?"

"No!" she cries, shaking herself a bit, "not in the least. This sofa is comfortable and you are vastly entertaining, that is what 'is so'!"

He shook his head. "As Madame wills."

"That is better. Now tell me, Mr. De Barreaux, where have you been since you left Triborg?"

"Kishineff," is the succinct answer.

"Oh!"

"Bishop King," announces the butler.

"Pardon me!" Marjorie rises to greet her uncle.

"Well, my dear, well," he bends in courtly fashion over her hand and, before Marjorie can present De Barreaux to him, Mr. Propper and Mrs. Propper number two come sailing down for their exit; Mrs. Propper number one is discreetly up the room, looking on with Jack Stowe at her side.

Dolly, who has just been expiring over her sister's adventure, in sympathy with Lord Seaborough, beholds the situation.

"Now!" exclaims the Child in his Lordship's ear, "how's that for Church and State? They call the dear old Bishop a trimmer," she adds.

"Of hats or frocks?" inquires the Earl.

"Hush! He'll recognize them, I'll wager you a box of cigars to one of bonbons!"

"Done!" cries his Lordship.

"Won!" says the Child.

Gordon King had not hesitated the twentieth part of a second, although Marjorie managed to present De Barreaux to him in order to give him time to leave the doorway free for Mr. and Mrs. Propper to get away. The Bishop immediately turned toward the man and woman as they approached. He put out a hand to each; those hands were gladly taken. "I am always happy," he says, "to see those whom I have numbered among my congregations. I am preaching at the old church on Sunday morning next; won't you both come down and encourage me with your presence."

They said they would, and they went.

"Old man's the right sort now, isn't he?" comments Dolly. "I do not approve of divorce and papa certainly is not divorced properly yet; still he's a perfect dandy to look at and she wasn't to blame for falling in love with him; if religion's good for anything, the wicked need it more than the good."

"Amen," cries the Earl, laughing at her.

"Uncle Gordon," says Marjorie, "I am sure you will be glad to talk to Mr. De Barreaux; he is just here from Kishineff."

Gordon King turned sharply toward his new acquaintance.

"Yes," said De Barreaux. "It is not yet one month since I quitted that most unfortunate and accursed spot."

"You are a Russian, sir?" inquires the older man.

"No, sir," proudly, "I am a Pole, and," more proudly, "I am a Jew."

"Then the more qualified to tell me, if you will be so kind, of your impressions of that most awful affair."

Gordon King, whose charm of manner was as great as his learning, and whose breadth of insight and largeness of grasp were as boundless as his charity, said this with a hearty and yet delicate distinction which must have won the confidence of anyone to whom it was addressed. The Bishop was one of the band of splendid Christians who are, in the best and noblest sense of the word, "men of the world"—men acquainted with the world and the world's ways, able to enter into the lives, temptations, fallacies, foibles, failings, aspirations, pleasures, and sorrows of mankind; a man, in short, who "understood" and who was not aloof but always exactly there, to hear, to sympathize, to help, to counsel, and, some people said, to condone.

"Ah, that I do not know, your reverence," De Barreaux replies. "The victim, or he who sympathizes with the down-trodden, is not always sufficiently impartial to prove an authority on the case. I am, as I say, a Jew."

His tone is slightly insistent, his glance is partly for Marjorie, who sits listlessly by, sipping her tea at last. Her eyes meet his largely and with neither prejudice nor increase of interest.

"And I take it," says Gordon King, "that you are proud of your nationality?"

"I am. You, sir, then look upon us as a nation and not a creed?" he asks in glad surprise.

"As a nation emphatically, a wonder nation—God's own nation. The nation without a country," he adds, with pathos, "and therefore the nation to whom all countries should extend their welcome, their harbor, their protection, and their privileges."

The Hebrew heaved a sigh of unutterable appreciation. "You are one who does not forget that your Jesus Himself was a Jew?" he says at last, in the low, musical tone which was penetrating in its appeal and in its suavity.

"He was a Jew," is Gordon King's reply in a low and reverent tone.

"And His own people murdered Him."

The Bishop glanced up at the young man near him.

"That Calvary murder seems to me the vilest assassination on record," continues De Barreaux, "and it is my belief that for it we suffer today. For it we have to endure Kishineff and all that has gone before Kishineff."

"Your belief is an unusual one," says the Bishop quietly, but with an intense interest.

"No," returns the other, "it is common among us, but we do not speak out. The Jew has whispered for so many generations he is afraid now to talk aloud."

Gordon King smiled. "Are you not mistaken there? With Hebrews riding in triumph in every branch of art and trade and power, the voice is loud enough, and with perfect justice, too, is it not?"

"Ah, yes, there! there!" returns De Barreaux. "Trade, money, finance, painting, music, sculpture, acting, poetry, romance, travel, exploring—the minute arts—why, the jewels in the Pope's tiara were set there by Jewish workmen! In all that which is mundane, inconsequential, superficial, I grant you the Hebrew is loud, blatant, in evidence. I spoke of the soul, the mind, the thought, which lives behind our drawn jealousies, whether they be of silk and fine lace on your Fifth Avenue, or of hewn wood concealing the fish-oil lamp that stands in the middle of a mud hut in darkest Russia."

"I understand you now," the older man says feelingly.

Marjorie had slipped away from them into the back

room where Dolly lingers yet with Seaborough and a few others. The two men are thus left together quite alone.

"Yes, I think we suffer and are killed because we made Him suffer and killed Him on Calvary," hesitates De Barreaux.

"Yet you deny His Godhead?"

"Oh," smiling and shrugging his shoulders, "that is quite another thing. He was, we think, a man."

"If only man," returns the theologian quickly, "why should your race suffer for His death through hundreds of years any more than for other deaths for which they may be held responsible?"

"Because your Jesus was the greatest man, the best man and truest—not excepting our Moses—who ever lived."

"Ah."

"It is a revenge, a judgment upon us and upon our children. I tell you, were I a Christian," his light eyes flash, "a believer in this chimera—pardon me—of the Incarnation, I should not think the blood of twenty millions of Jews too many to atone for the murder of my God." His aspect is that of one inspired and his pale face shines with the intense and feverish anxiety and exaltation of his mood. Gordon King regarded him.

"My God, our God, our Jehovah! Ah, I swear to you by the Talmud and the prophets, if you had had the chance and assassinated Him, I should think endless centuries too few to be avenged in, flesh for flesh, blood for blood, torture for torture."

"'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord,'" the Churchman murmured.

"True," replies the other, "and we are the instruments of that vengeance. Kishineff is the long-reaching shadow of the cross of Jesus. We bear it. Every Jew that ever was born, reverend sir, carries it on his

back as a burden; and in one word it is crystallized for his edification throughout the world."

"What is that word?" asks Gordon King.

"Toleration," answers the Hebrew. "We are tolerated, that is all."

"No, no," disclaims the older man.

"Yes, but yes, your pardon. If we do anything, succeed at anything, excel in anything, attain, obtain, create, snatch, recover, or wrest anything, when the news is told in the market-place or printed in the newspaper one thing is always added: 'He is a Jew.' Eh? is it not so?"

Gordon King bowed his head.

"But if the Christian does those things it is not printed 'He is a Christian,' eh?"

"No," says Gordon King.

"What we do, what we are, what we have, is all in spite of the fact that we are Jews. Ah, I assure you, the cross is more of a burden to the Jew than it is to any Christian who lives today."

"This is a new phase of theory to me."

"Why!" exclaims De Barreaux, with a species of scorn, "you listen to me this moment and your mental attitude is this: 'I listen to this person despite his being a Hebrew.' You do not listen to me with the dispassion and the fellowship that you would were I a member of your own church!"

"I don't know, I don't quite know," replies the older man with entire candor.

"I know! I know!" exclaims the musician. "I know very well; I am just from Kishineff where my people tremble all hours of the day."

"God help them," said the other, "and we men must help them. Ah," he adds, "Mr. De Barreaux, I am extremely happy to have met you. I would be glad to have your promise to come and see me over in Chelsea Square. I want to inform you of our American Jews;

I want you to learn that we have those who are a glory to our citizenship and that nowhere in America do your people tremble. That nowhere here," he speaks with solemnity, truth, and great impressive kindliness, "does the cross of my Master hang heavier on Jewish shoulders than on Christian. I want you to learn that that cross is not the sign of burden, the insignia of slavery or wretchedness or fear, but the mark of happiness and brotherly love and good feeling to men of every faith under the sun. It's four arms stretching North, South, East, and West. You will come and see me? "

"Yes, I will come. I am not worthy. I thank your reverence—I will come." They shook hands.

CHAPTER XIII

Billy

MR. DUANE not only halted, but forbore to enter the drawing-room and went straight back into the library.

He looked over each of the pile of evening papers awaiting him there but took in little of what he read.

His thoughts went back at once to the evening of Tommy's farewell dinner and to his meeting with De Barreaux after the lapse of years; to the Syrian girl who had quitted the Pole and come to him with her love—which he had accepted and taken pleasure in, and left and forgotten—as is not infrequently the manner of men. He also recalled the promise De Barreaux had made to be even with him some day and De Barreaux's reminder to him of that promise at the Waldorf. He recalled with exactitude the conversation that night and the tally that he made of it with Marjorie.

It would be useless for him to deny or attempt to cheat himself any longer. De Barreaux had not only not forgotten his oath of the past, but he had distinctly, with finesse, adroitness, dexterity, and a certain aspect of frankness, conveyed to Billy that his intention was to even up matters between them by way of Billy's wife.

He allowed that some men, possibly wiser ones, in his position that night, would have forbidden the Hebrew the house.

But Billy did not regret his move. In the first place his confidence in his wife was entire; in the second he was too proud a man to have set one stone in a woman's way if she wished to console herself for his failure to have preserved her interest. Then, crashing through all this

wall of pride, came the elementary, brute impulse to start out into the other room now, pitch De Barreaux into the street, turn all the people out of doors, snap out the lights, dismiss the servants, and take Marjorie into his arms whether she would or would not.

He even got up from his chair with this express impulse guiding him; then suddenly he remembered Fatima and sat down. He had never told Marjorie of her—not even hinted at such an episode; it had not been precisely an ordinary episode either.

He had first seen the Syrian girl at De Barreaux's rooms one evening at a supper. Just a glimpse of the soft, Eastern eyes looking steadfastly out at him from the folds of her veil. De Barreaux had sufficiently explained that the girl was extremely dear to him. Therefore, when she came to Billy and insisted upon staying with him, he tried to persuade her to go back. She would not—at least not without coercion, and coercion was something he was not disposed to make use of just then. Billy, in common with most of his sex, loved to be loved. Fatima remained with Billy.

He took her to Paris when his college days were over, and to Vienna and Berlin, made much of her, and was fond of her in the fashion that a man may be fond of a woman who is first fond of him; he lavished all the things upon her that she might be supposed to desire for a number of years, until one day he left Europe, not bidding her even good-by.

Billy hated to say good-by to any one who had been kind to him, and was of the opinion that to go was easier than to talk about going.

He left Fatima a note, which, by the by, she could not read, but stood on her doorstep staring at when De Barreaux came along.

"I will read your letter to you, Fatima," he said.

He did so; it was a letter of love, one may say, stretching that word not any more than many people stretch

it every hour of the day and night; it also said that inclosed was a draft for five hundred pounds and that she must "try to be happy with someone else!" Which latter sentence was quite enough commentary on Billy's own state of heart.

Fatima had thanked De Barreaux for reading the letter, and had withdrawn into her place of abode.

Billy, although he knew nothing of Fatima when he wooed and won and married Marjorie Livingston, had not wholly forgotten her. He had wanted to tell Marjorie, but every time he attempted to open such a subject his courage failed him; his distaste for himself, his humiliation and shame grew greater and he decided that he could not do it.

He knew very well that if he did Marjorie would not marry him—that was the fact of the matter. That with her ideas, she would say to him, "You must marry Fatima, she is your wife; I never can be. Go away from me, I don't ever wish to see you again."

Billy knew that and kept still. If there were any risk, which did not occur to him even as a possibility, he would have taken it cheerfully; he would have risked hell with smiles to have won Marjorie.

Yet, today, sitting there, almost within ear-shot of Marjorie's voice, with Marjorie's and his boy upstairs, he was questioning himself if he had been altogether fair to Marjorie in not telling her and biding the issue.

That picture, so perfect, so accordant, so harmonious of her and De Barreaux sitting together, as he had beheld them a quarter of an hour ago when he came home, struck him such a blow, as it rose again and again before his eyes, that he was almost beside himself.

For the first time in his life Billy (so called because principally it was not his name) Duane was cornered and at odds with himself. He absolutely did not know what to do. To take hold of her and keep her close to him, his face turned away and tell her all, was of

course the primal instinct. But Billy feared to lose his all.

Billy had, too, a mysterious impression—pshaw, why does one say “mysterious”? there is nothing “mysterious” about it, it is as unoccult as sunshine, as commonplace as speech when we have these “impressions”—an impression that De Barreaux and his wife had met before; that there was established between them a friendliness somewhat outside the beaten track, somewhat apart from the side of his wife with which he was familiar; that sight of them together had revealed it to him, spoken to him of a bond other than and more potent, if less tangible, that those that now kept him and Marjorie together.

The whole thing in its intricacies enraged and mortified him. Circumstances, for the first time in his career, had gotten the best of him; he was floored—and between pride, remorse, jealousy, and suspicion he was as near being a madman as a really sane one ever comes. To *do* had ever been Billy’s watchword, and although he could be silent it was out of the man’s range to be inactive. But inactive, he made up his mind in pretty short order, was just the thing he must submit to being. He could neither kill De Barreaux nor order him out. He couldn’t make his confession to Marjorie. He would not ask for the manifestation of a love that he felt was gone away from him.

“Gone away from him. Where? To De Barreaux?” He sprang up and spoke out loud. Yes, the thing condensed itself down into just that one blinding thought. Words that he could hear made it plain to him. This was what had really been in his mind ever since that night of Tommy’s dinner. Now he knew it; he had been beating about the bush and trying to cheat and comfort himself ever since, but it was of no use any longer.

Duane was no coward, but he did what many a brave

man has done under similar circumstances. He ran away from them. Ran away into the other life of public affairs, politics, ambitions, excitements, triumphs, fears, schemes, manœuvres, managements—put it away from him, hid it under the pressure and strain of his office and his plans for further offices—the things he had heretofore toiled after for her sake, her pride, her gratification in him he henceforth would grasp and reach for, conquer, subdue, attain, for the mere sake of the struggle, and to keep him from thinking the old, sweet thoughts of her.

Instead of stopping at home for dinner therefore that Tuesday, he went away and dined with some fellows at one of his clubs. He thought to himself: "Supposing that De Barreaux should tell Marjorie about Fatima?" But with a chivalry that is not uncommon, he dismissed this as an unworthy idea. He felt confident that De Barreaux would do nothing of that kind. Billy was able to be just—as yet.

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CHAPTER XIV

The Studio in the Village of Ahl-esh Shemal

WHEN De Barreaux quitted the Duanes he got into an auto and said to the chauffeur "Washington Street."

"What number, sir?"

"There is not any, I think. It is Malouf's, next to Malouf's, that I want."

"Oh, yes, sir, Malouf's!" the man touched his cap and was off.

Not very far off Wall Street, but a few steps from Battery Park, and within a subdued hearing of the trolley gongs and the elevated rattle and roar, the cab slid around out of the intensity of modern Broadway into the dolce far niente of Syria—"Little Syria."

The shop-windows were full of inscriptions in Arabic characters; rosaries of okra, chiselled hanging-lamps in brass, crescents of silver and gilt, beautiful real rugs—a thousand things to eat, to wear, to drink strung up in these windows. The street was clean, far cleaner than the native streets, a few women, many children with preternaturally polite manners, and some little hungry dogs trotting about.

It was a dark evening, which causes Malouf's restaurant to appear brilliant, and a little of this light shines sideways upon the narrow, dingy doorway next it; before this one De Barreaux stands for a moment, searching for the key in his pocket, after he has dismissed the cab.

This doorway was so narrow that Malouf himself, a fat personage, could not have entered it without much squeezing. De Barreaux, who was slight, supple, of an

elegant and yet athletic build, slipped in and closed the door after him with that somewhat elaborate care which almost invariably marks the man of Eastern descent or origin in dealing with the entrance to his place.

The staircase, up which one was forced to stumble immediately one got into the building, was pitch dark; narrow, too, and steep; as one ascended there was no light till one came to a landing. Then another flight of stairs as long and dark as the first; at the top of the second landing another narrow, forbidding door. Another key fitted this time to a brass padlock; the door swung cautiously, and all at once the place was enveloped in a flood of splendid light and warmth. De Barreaux entered and closed this door. This was his studio.

He already had achieved exhibitions in two of the Paris salons, had captured a prize at Rome, and was indeed something of an artist.

He crossed immediately to the windows to draw the curtains, for although the apartment was far above any of its neighbors and utterly inaccessible to human eyes, the remnant of an inheritance that came down the centuries still embarrassed De Barreaux and caused him, like his persecuted ancestors, to draw the blinds close against the outside world, especially after nightfall.

Before he shut out the exterior entirely he glanced forth. Yonder lay the river front with its long, extending docks, the tall masts and smoke-stacks, clustering now against the dull red of an autumnal sky; there, the confusion, hurry, and turmoil of the cars and trucks and drays, the teeming swarms of the workers; here, down below on the sidewalk of little Beyrout, there was no stress, merely the sweet, sensuous music from a Syrian orchestra—the violin, the lute, the mandolin, with a jingle now and then from a tambourine; on the sidewalk, in front of Malouf's, a motley crew of Turks, Egyptians, Syrians, Armenians, sipping arrack, munching

nuts, reading the newspaper of the quarter, with its beginning where we think its end ought to be. He pulled the curtains together—they were Cashmere shawls of dull and beautiful tints—lighted the lamps, which were of beaten brass, hanging on chains from the ceiling. The walls were covered with rose silk hangings, and the floors with rugs of faded pink; there were piles of cushions everywhere, all embroidered in heavy silks and metallic threads, but not a chair. Many tables with brass vases on them, incrustated with colored crystals; teakwood stands, inlaid with mother-of-pearl; bronzes from the Orient; copies of the Koran and the Talmud and the Bible bound in Spanish leather, painted in oils with the faces of prophets on the covers; the scent of attar of roses over all, very faint, very exquisite, very enervating to Western sensibilities.

Isidoro De Barreaux retired into an inner room and put off his boots, coat, vest, collar, cravat, cuffs and watch-fob; put on a Syrian robe of pink and silver, a fez upon his head, a long golden chain with crystals, and sandals on his feet. Now he was quite ready to paint

He set his easel forward and took up his palette and knife to mix some colors. Then he uncovered the canvas upon which he was at work. It was a picture of the dancing woman, Fatima, and intended for the American spring exhibition. He pulled a bell-rope and at the same moment set the door ajar. Presently she came in, and stood still as if awaiting orders. "Bring me," he said, "the coffee, some Beh-Lahadwa and some pistachio nuts, if you please."

She bowed and went away, presently returning with the food and setting it down near him where he reclined on a pile of cushions. A child came with her—a most beautiful boy of ten, with all the rich, pure coloring of the mother and eyes as blue as any Saxon's that ever lived. His head was unshaven, wherein he differed from

all the other children of little Syria, but his dress was Eastern.

He sat down a little way from De Barreaux and watched greedily for the crumbs that fell, or were occasionally tossed to him, from the Hebrew's plate. This amused De Barreaux very much. He did not like the child; it was not his, and it afforded him much satisfaction to see it scramble for the morsels which he discarded.

When he had finished sipping his thick Mocha, he pushed the cup toward the boy, who drained the dregs, and then curling his lovely little fat legs up on the cushions, he laid down his head and went to sleep.

"Beggar!" De Barreaux's tone was scornful.

Fatima covered the child with her vest which she now took off, replacing it with one of much splendor, embroidered in arabesques of gold: she slipped bracelets of colored glass beads on her arms and took up her position on the dais.

"You have forgotten the henna," the painter says, looking up at her, perhaps for the first time that night.

She went over to the stand for a silver jar and took from it some of the fine, green powder and mixing it with water from a carafe, tipped her cheeks and fingers, and then resumed her pose. All this while, she had said nothing.

De Barreaux painted away for an hour in perfect silence; for now even the lute, violin, and mandolin had moved farther down the street to Hassis' restaurant and could not be heard. Neither had he spoken for this hour. Another quarter passed, at which point he threw down his brushes and palette. "Bring me the nargileh, if you please," he said to her.

She brought it, placed the crystal receptacle near him half full of the orange perfumed water, ignited the cube of charcoal, handed him the amber mouth-piece and saw the little bubbles rise and burst and the smoke begin to ascend.

It amused and interested him to have this woman serve him; it was a species of fine and sweet revenge to him that the woman whom Duane had caressed should wait upon him as a servant, or almost as a servant—not quite.

Fatima now pushed a pile of cushions opposite to him, and sat down upon them, lifting the veil a little from her face. Still she did not speak at all.

“Well,” he said at last. “I have not been able to get here for some time; not since the night you danced for Mr. Eckford at the Waldorf.” He smiled. She said nothing, but looked at him. “I promised you that I would arrange matters so that you should dance there and see Mr. Duane. You saw him?”

Fatima nodded her head slowly.

“He did not see your face?”

She shook her head, slowly, too.

“Why not?”

No answer; utter impassibility.

“The agreement was,” De Barreaux continues in his soft, sweet, but cutting voice, “that if I brought you over here and brought you face to face with him, you would make trouble for him; you would break up his home and ruin him in the eyes of the world and his wife, was not that our agreement? And you are doing nothing.”

The Syrian woman inclined her head, plucking a little at the fringes of her shawl.

“Well?” She is silent still.

“Speak!” he commands in an irritated tone.

“You brought me, too, because you loved me—is it not so?” she asks.

“Yes.”

“No more love me?”

“No.”

“Ah, I think not.”

“But you like that best. You have never cared for

me since you left me for him long ago. You have never so much as put your hand in mine even in memory of the past."

His exquisite eyes are bent upon her. He had no feeling for her of any kind, but his was one of those natures that could not help making love casually to any woman who chanced to be near.

When it came to the real love, the supreme passion, Marjorie had that, nor did he desire to infringe upon it by one iota.

"I tell you I love no one but Billy," Fatima says. "I work for you here, there, anywhere, so I may see Billy, but to do him harm! oh, no!"

"You promised," says the Hebrew.

"To break like that!" She snaps the glass bead bracelet on her wrist and crushes the baubles in her hands. "I love Billy, I wish him happy. I do him not any harm."

"Then you told me what was not true?"

"A lie!" She laughs a little. "Yes, to get here, where he is, I would tell more of those. I swear I would!"

De Barreaux now smiled with apparent good humor. It was true the jade had tricked him, but already she was a thorn in Duane's soul, that he knew; and he would contrive yet to use her so that she should prove more and more a thorn; more and more of a stepping-stone to him in his endeavor to obtain possession of the woman whom he now worshipped.

During those years since Isidore Baer had sworn to be avenged on Billy Duane, he had never lost sight of his purpose; a fatalist of the fatalists, he had made no moves, planned no campaigns, sought no means. "It will come," he had always said to himself; as he said also of the woman whom he should love, "she will appear."

When he first beheld Marjorie's face, in the parlor of the hotel at Triborg, he knew that fate had brought

the woman of his soul to his side. As he had told her later, he made no effort to discover even her name on his return from Mainz, but went to Kishineff, giving alms out of his abundance; thence to the United States, to meet her again—and to find her the wife of his enemy. For De Barreaux nothing could have been vouchsafed more perfectly suited to his disposition, than this identity of the love of his life with Duane's wife.

By this means he saw every ambition of his being gratified by a coinciding chain of circumstances; every blow that he struck against the husband would be one to draw the wife nearer to him. He would not have had anything otherwise, and a complete enjoyment was his at the intimate realization that Fatima, too, was in New York. His intricate, Oriental soul revelled in the web, and soothed its own fires in the delicious meshes that Fate was so kindly weaving, he fancied, for his especial delectation.

"I put hand no one but Billy's, never!" exclaims the Syrian in her slow, monotonous voice. "I work for Malouf, Malouf's wife, I dance when have chance; earn bread, coffee, clothes for Maro," pointing to the boy, "and me. Once, twice, oftentime maybe I see Billy, look his face, that will do."

"You do not wish to speak to him?" he inquires, meditatively.

"Some time come, yes; I like. I wait. I can. I know how. He happy. Two cannot be so; so we say in Syria: 'one happy: one not happy.' Like better Billy happy than me."

"With another woman?" asks De Barreaux, fixing his eyes upon her.

She said nothing immediately. Then she got up from the cushions and picked up the sleeping child in her arms.

"Strike not me," she cried with a strange, melancholy

smile, fire blazing in her eyes. "I am already on the ground."

And Fatima walked away down to the rooms behind the restaurant where Malouf's wife and children lived, where she and Maro lived, too, with them.

CHAPTER XV

Mrs. McGuire

ON the following Tuesday at three o'clock, Mrs. Michael McGuire's card was brought up to Mrs. Duane, for Mrs. McGuire knew quite enough to come early on a day at home if she desired any real conversation with the hostess.

Marjorie was rather glad that she did come before any one else would think of appearing. She was a bit shaky now that it came to that end of the social move which included presenting the Alderman's lady to her own circle.

The Alderman himself had passed in and out among the throng, unnoticed and unremarked, save by her and the two or three to whom she introduced him; but the lady she somewhat dreaded in the capacity of a guest. It was therefore with a cheerful alacrity that at three o'clock she came downstairs to the drawing-room and greeted her new acquaintance.

"How do you do, ma'am!" exclaimed Mrs. Michael McGuire, extending a fat hand in a tight and immaculate white kid glove. "Sure it's indebted to you I am for the iligant time the children had wid the ponies in the Park Sunday."

"I am glad they enjoyed it, I am sure," is Mrs. Duane's response. "I thought they would. Is Maud better of her cough?"

"That she is, ma'am, thanks be to God! And how's yourself?"

"Always well, Mrs. McGuire, and your good husband, how is he?"

"Michael is well, ma'am. I thought I'd better come

early, before the company got here." Mrs. McGuire lowers her voice and edges nearer to Marjorie as she speaks. "You see," continues the Alderman's lady hurriedly, yet not without a certain respectable dignity in her method, "it's myself was just a plain cook whin Michael took a shine to me and him drivin' the cart for Mr. Boyd, the grocer. My brother, Tim Feeney, was always in politics, him beginnin' public life at the bottom of the ladder with sellin' papers on the 'L.'"

"Indeed!" exclaims Mrs. Duane with as great an interest as if listening to the recital of a dear friend.

"Yes, ma'am, and if I do say it myself, I've had a hand in raisin' Mike to where he is the day!"

"I don't doubt it, Mrs. McGuire. We wives can be great factors in our husbands' successes!"

"Ah-h!" says the Alderman's lady with an accent of discovery. "Mike was right thin."

"How so?" inquires the hostess with a smile.

"You're in it for all it's worth, ma'am."

"In what?"

"Politics, ma'am."

"Oh!" she laughs blithely. "What makes you think that?"

"Now see here, ma'am, it's on account of thim ponies and your callin' on the likes of me over the saloon, and invitin' me and Mike to visit you. 'It's all politics,' says Mike, says he, and 'don't you be lettin' the Mayor-elect's lady make a fool of ye, Kitty,' says he."

"Not a fool, Mrs. McGuire, a friend, that is what I want to make of you and your husband both," is the reply.

"Me a frind to you, ma'am. Sure, that's nonsense!"

"Not at all," pursues Marjorie. "I can help you; you can help me, or the reverse."

"Thru for you, ma'am."

"Women's influence in public affairs is very powerful, Mrs. McGuire. I understand that you know how

to use yours with both your brother and your husband. Now, frankly, I want your influence."

"Do you, ma'am?"

"Yes, I certainly do for the right and the good."

"Ivery party, ma'am, has thim two words printed on its banner."

Marjorie smiles.

"The Lord above us help us, we're all workin' for thim words on the banner!"

"The question is," says Mrs. Duane, "don't we generally leave the words on the banner, and work it out for our own interests in the campaign?"

"People must live, ma'am," remarks the Alderman's lady conclusively.

"But not on trickery, fraud, bribery, and illegal deals." -

"Who's talkin' about the likes of that, ma'am! Sure, Michael McGuire's an honest man, wid a record for doin' the square by ivery livin' soul that iver did him a single good turn. He put Patrick O'Toole on the Force, and him over age and wid the consumption! He made Jimmy O'Halloran a court stenographer, and Jimmy not able to write annythin' but his mark, ma'am; and he got Biglin Brothers the asphalt job for five wards after thim havin' their work condemned by the Boord, so he did, ma'am, all because they'd contributed their money like gentlemen, whin he was runnin' for Alderman the first time! Mike's an honest man, ma'am, that's wan sure thing about it."

"Do you think it's honest, Mrs. McGuire, to put men in positions who are utterly incapable of fulfilling the duties? Do you think it's honest to swindle the government and make it pay comfortable salaries for nothing?" Mrs. Duane spoke earnestly and advisedly.

"Well, ma'am, sure'n what's the governmint for if it ain't to support thim that supports it?" inquires Mrs. McGuire with perfect serenity.

"For better things, I trust," is the reply. "Now, Mrs. McGuire, I sought your acquaintance because I know you to be a woman of influence in the Democratic party in the City of New York."

"Bedad, ma'am, that's jist what me husband said!" exclaims the lady, laughing.

"Your husband is correct. Because I knew him to be a power here, I want your coöperation."

"Well, ma'am," is the Alderman's lady's reply, "if you've got money enough in your pocket you can have it."

"I don't intend to pay one cent for it, Mrs. McGuire," says Marjorie, while the big Irishwoman's eyes sparkle as brilliantly as the big diamonds in her ears. "I want you, as a good woman, an honorable woman, the mother of growing up children, the wife of a man in public life, to help me to make politics cleaner, purer, more honest, more decent."

"You mane, ma'am, that your husband's goin' to run for Governor whin his term as Mayor expires, don't you?" Mrs. McGuire asks with pleasant abruptness.

"I have never heard him say so," is the answer.

"Oh, but he is, ma'am, he is, and I'm not above sayin' to you that I'm in perfect sympathy with you about the purification of politics, ma'am, and so is Michael! Sure it's the beautiful spache he made on that subject wan week before he was elected last time! I'll sind Michael to see you, ma'am, and I'm sure we can make the deal!" Mrs. McGuire rises.

"Do you think you understand me?" asks Marjorie, doubtfully, all her splendid little visions of reforming the McGuire faction, appealing to the higher nature, etc., etc., oozing gradually away from her.

"Indade'n I do, ma'am. There was no need for you to bate about the bush wid thim little ponies, ma'am," the Alderman's lady smiles jocosely. "You might have come to the point standin' on your own two legs in

shorter order. We're both in it, ma'am, and we understand aich other pretty well. Nobody's givin' somethin' for nothin' in this world, ma'am." Mrs. McGuire winks playfully.

"No," replies the hostess, still doubtfully. "I suppose not."

"We're movin' away from the Bowery soon," remarks Mrs. McGuire, proceeding toward the door.

"Yes?" pleasantly interrogative.

"Mike's goin' to begin to build on upper Fifth Avenue whin the new Mayor," Mrs. McGuire now winks still more playfully at her hostess, "signs the bill for the appropriation that we're afther, and the house'll be done by the time he's out of office again."

"What appropriation?" asks Mrs. Duane, in a strained tone.

"Sure, the wan we've been talkin' about, av coorse!" replies Mrs. McGuire, laughingly. "Shall Mike come around this evening, ma'am?"

"No, to-morrow evening at eight, if you please. There will be a lot of people here to-night. I shall hope to see you soon again, Mrs. McGuire."

"Oh, if the deal goes through, ma'am, as it must," says the woman with firmness and emphasis, "we're like to see one another sometimes. We've got the same dress-maker now, I'm thinkin', haven't we?"

"O'Leary?" exclaims Marjorie in a voice that is surprised, notwithstanding its perfect courtesy.

"That same, ma'am, bein' me own cousin, oncet removed, and as foine a lady, her goin' to Paree twicet a year for the fashions, as iver walked."

"A very clever woman O'Leary is!" Marjorie answers, putting out her small hand to meet the guest's robust grasp.

"Good-by, ma'am. I'll sind Mike to-morrow!"

CHAPTER XVI

The Fifty-ninth Street Deal

"WELL, Kitty?" Mr. McGuire's tone is slightly tinged with impatience. He is sitting on one side of the supper-table, his spouse on the other, while the seven children are disposed at left and right of their parents.

The meal is over. Mr. McGuire has lighted his quarter-of-a-dollar cigar. So has his eldest son. The two girls and the four younger boys are all busily chewing gum and battling over the evening papers.

"Oh, it's all right, Mike, no fears for her," is the matron's reassuring reply. "She's got the talk down foine about the 'purification of politics.'" Mrs. McGuire laughs as she fingers up a succulent bit of cabbage from the dish.

"Do you think he's really after the Governorship?" asks McGuire. "That's the principal thing I wanted ye to find out."

"Sure," is the answer. "Keen for it."

"Will they pay the price to git it, though? That's the ticket!" exclaims the Alderman, bringing his fist down with a thump on his table.

"Ah, indade'n they will. I tould her you were buildin' in upper Fifth Avenue as soon as the new Mayor signed the bill for the appropriation we were wantin', and that her husband had Albany in his eye, and that nobody was givin' somethin' for nothin' and——"

"Hold on, Kitty, what did she tell you?"

"She tould me," says Mrs. McGuire, with an air of triumph, "for you to go to see her to-morrow evenin'!"

"Begorra she did!" exclaims the Irishman, rising excitedly. "I thought she'd fight us. Max was talkin' to Dan Satterlee about her. Sure, the whole crowd knows she's into it and goin' to spind her own money to put him in the Governor's chair."

"She's got it to burn," remarks the lady, "and I kin tell you she's puttin' up political finces all over the State, too."

"What do ye mane?"

"Jist what I say. Sure she's givin' a big Thanks-givin' threat out at his mills and the whole crowd from Hinery Hull's is goin' to be invited, too!"

"She's a daisy," says Mr. McGuire.

"She's the brainy wan. Oh, wait till ye see her!" is Mrs. McGuire's response.

"I'll not go see her!" says Mr. McGuire.

"What's that?" in a shrill voice.

"Nope," replies the Alderman. "I'll sind Max; he kin size her up and do the tony act and fix her up O.K. betther than iver I could, and come home wid her word for the deal."

"She ain't sassy at all at all," remarks Mrs. McGuire.

"Get out wid ye, Kitty! I ain't afraid of her or her sass. What kin she do without me and me frinds, I'd like to know?"

"Thrue fer you," is the admiring reply. "Well, sind Max, maybe it would be betther."

Late Tuesday night when all her guests had gone, Marjorie, up in her room alone, was very near to tears over the lamentable issue of her invasion of the Seventh Ward of her native city. What a little fool she had been to be sure, to fancy that she, ignorant, alone, unaided, could stand up to further the nomination and election of the Governor of the State. She had been mad to attempt it, and one by one—as she sat there, combing out her long, soft hair, having sent off her maid to bed—one by one her plans and projects toppled over and fell

to the ground, like a child's paper cannons and soldiers before a breeze. Should she then, because Mrs. McGuire had proved to be impossible, give up her whole scheme? For impossible Marjorie recognized the woman and her faction to be. She knew that she might just as well knock her head against a ten-foot stone wall as to ever try to move, remove, or alter one of the prejudices or practices of the McGuire-Feeny faction.

It was her first lesson in political power as exemplified by the opposition, and she frankly said to herself that with this phase of it she could not cope successfully and could only stand up for her platform of right against wrong and go ahead. Should she go ahead? What would Billy say? A hundred times a day this question arose and confronted her. Billy, her Billy of the old, sweet, dead and gone time would, she knew, draw her away completely from any such pool of contagion as he would call it; would shelter her safe in his arm's fold and tell her her place was there. But the sweet time was gone forever. Billy had put her outside of all his plans and ambitions. She herself—well, what did she give Billy? Like a flash of lightning the thought of Isidoro De Barreaux came to her. At the same instant she realized that his society, his sympathy, his exquisite comprehension of her moods were already much to her.

She decided that since she could not give Billy the things she once had given him; that, since Billy no longer wanted her, she would at least make the reparation she could—she would go on with her schemes for making him Governor. Since love was denied her, or was gone out of her heart and her home, she, then, would take this new excitement in its place. She would strive to conquer—and for him. That was certainly loyal. And if she permitted herself to see De Barreaux, to listen to his words and his music, well, what harm? Billy did not care if she had twenty men admiring her all at once. Would she care if Billy admired some other

woman? Marjorie rose and walked up and down the floor. He didn't! He didn't! He didn't. She was sure.

How could she be? During all that year of her absence had he ever once suggested to her to come home sooner? No. Then she sat down again before the fire and was very still for a long, long time. She wrote to De Barreaux a note in answer to one from him, telling him she would be at home the next evening at nine o'clock and that he might come and play for her. She had not forgotten that McGuire was to call that evening, but she fancied that by nine he would be disposed of.

At eight precisely a smart electric hansom dashed up to Mrs. Duane's door. A little gentleman alighted; he was faultlessly attired in the most extreme edicts of the mode of the moment. He ran up the steps and took out his card from a jewelled card case. He was Mr. Max Schroeder, Chairman of the Democratic Club. With his own card he sent in that of Mrs. Michael McGuire as introducing him to Mrs. Duane. He was ushered presently into the library, where he found Mrs. Duane sitting by the large, round table, her back to the open safe. She greeted him with cordiality and motioned him to a seat opposite to her own.

Mr. Schroeder professed himself as delighted to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Duane, the wife of the Mayor-elect, and his manner and mode of expression were such as to cause his hostess considerable surprise. The social apparatus pertaining to the Hon. Max Schroeder was indeed admirable, finished, glib, well balanced as to deference and disdain; almost—it would seem to the casual observer—to the manor born. The fact of the matter was he was an Alsatian by birth, could speak five languages with that amount of fluency so often found among his class; had been valet to several titled men, then courier to an American family of some distinction who lived much abroad; he had rare assimilative powers,

great gifts of imitation, enormous and methodical habits of memory; he never forgot a face or a name or a circumstance or an accident. His command of manner ranged from the affabilities and amenities of a courtier to the blackguardism of a Tenderloin tough, and he had, so to speak, ready for action, whichever button chanced to be the one to touch on the occasion. He called all women "Matame" with a delightful little foreign accent, except those whom he addressed as "my tear."

"Matame!" said Mr. Schroeder, his black eyes taking in both the beauty of her face and the price of her lace, "here is a leetle note from, may I say, our mutual frient, Mr. McGuire, vich vill egsplain my being here in his blace dis ev'ning. Vill you do me der favor to read it?" handing the note. "And permit me—?" Mr. Schroeder adjusts his eye-glasses, takes up a paper from the table and proceeds to watch Mrs. Duane over the top of it.

"Certainly, Mr. Schroeder. With your permission then?"

Marjorie reads the note. It had been written by Mr. Schroeder's oldest son. Mr. McGuire himself, although he had learned to sign his name and had signed it to this document, was not quite up to composing any sort of a letter. It ran:

"My dear Mrs. Duane: Mrs. McGuire had told me of the delightful and agreeable call she had at your house today. I am unable through pressure of public duties to call upon you this evening, but send instead the Chairman of the Democratic Club, Mr. Max Schroeder. You can talk to him just as free as you would to myself. One thing is certain, the job you are setting yourself is a big one and will take a lot of money. But I think everything can be fixed up all right for the next Governor if Mr. Duane sees his way clear to not meddling with the Fifty-ninth Street Bill. Being pleased

to subscribe myself your obedient servant, Michael McGuire."

From a contemplation of Mrs. Duane's face, Mr. Schroeder was unable, clever as he was, to reach any conclusion whatever. Mrs. Duane had been entirely conscious that her visitor was keeping watch of her face, and had made up her mind that it should be non-committal, or, rather, a blank. She folded the letter, replaced it in its envelope and retained it in her hand.

"You are aware of the contents of Mr. McGuire's letter, Mr. Schroeder?" she said pleasantly. Marjorie suddenly realized that in the battle in which she was engaged she must fight with the same weapons, or some of them at least, as those used by the opposition. She felt that in dealing with this man and this situation she must be wary and exceedingly courageous. She recognized that Max Schroeder was clever and not a McGuire, clever as they were; that the letter she held in her hand was one of the strongest weapons ever put into an enemy's hand by a foe; her blood rushed through her veins, her color rose; she held the letter carelessly, toying a bit with it, and instinct with the idea that it would mean something to her before she got through with the little, urbane gentleman who sat on the opposite side of her library table.

"I haf read it, Matame," is Schroeder's reply with a smile, and glancing at her with the not unnatural expectation that when a woman has a chance to talk, like the present one, she will at once set about it.

But herein Mrs. Duane presented a disappointment to Mr. Schroeder. She sat still, all the while playing with Mr. McGuire's letter. There was indeed a pause.

"Well, Mr. Schroeder?" said Marjorie finally.

"Vell, Matame?" replied Mr. Schroeder, who was to the full as subtle as his hostess. "I am here to listen to Matame mit der utmost attention."

"And I am receiving Mr. Schroeder in Mr. McGuire's

place for the express purpose of hearing all that Mr. Schroeder has to say," is the suave and courteous answer.

"Ah, I see! I see!" returns the little gentleman. "It is someting awkward for a lady to open up dese overdureds—ahem!" Mr. Max Schroeder smiled again, removed his glasses and rubbed his eyes a little with his perfectly well appointed hand.

"What overtures, Mr. Schroeder?" inquired Mrs. Duane, with such blandness as made her proud of herself, for, strange to say, her heart was beating to burst and she felt as if she were being beckoned slowly into the web by an uncomprising and hungry little spider.

Schroeder laid down his glasses now and regarded her. His manner changed somewhat. He received the idea that he had some talking to do himself. "Der teal," he said abruptly.

"What deal?" asked Marjorie seriously, leaning her two elbows on the table and her chin in her palms, the letter nevertheless between them.

"Matame," Mr. Schroeder picked up his glasses from the table. "I assure you I did not indrude upon your gourtesy in orter to exchange mere vords."

"Assuredly not," allows Mrs. Duane with admirable reserve, but without concession.

"Matame," says the little gentleman, now setting his glasses on his nose and assuming an instructive and somewhat reproachful tone, "I am here on pusiness," firmly.

"Mr. Schroeder I am aware of it, and it is my very earnest desire that you proceed to business at once."

"Aha, Matame!" exclaimed the Chairman of the Democratic Club, rubbing his hands together and drawing much closer to the table, leaning across it and looking his hostess squarely in the face. "Now ve unterstand each other. Mr. McGuire's note has conveyed to you der derms upon vich ve vill subbort Mr. Duane for der Gubernatorial contest?"

"It has," is Marjorie's answer as she looks down at Mr. McGuire's missive.

"Of gourse it vill require a leetle ready money in our hands as vell as in dose of Mr. Duane's own henchmen in his own barty."

Marjorie nodded her head.

"A matter of five tousand tollars ought to be sufficient to fix up der gountry bress and for burboses of general buplicity."

Marjorie nodded again.

Mr. Schroeder felt encouraged: he thought to himself that he might just as well have doubled the sum, and proceeded to do it. "Und I tink a condingent fund of say ten tousand"—he eyed his companion, but she did not flinch—"should be brovided in case der nomination is made. Have you any objections to offer to dis, Matame?"

"No objection in the world, sir."

"Dese amounts vould brovide for everypody and everything: dey all look for fodder, you know, and Democrats are a leetle tearer dan Republicans." Mr. Schroeder laughs jocularly.

"Are they though?" asks Mrs. Duane, while her heart throbs faster than ever. She instinctively feels that she is travelling toward a catastrophe. She is afraid of this pleasant, smooth little gentleman with the pretty foreign accent, and she is bound that he shall never know it, come what may.

"Oh yes," replies Max Schroeder. "Dey are, Matame, dey are. Now dot leetle matter being settled, vill you gife me your assurance dot Mr. Duane vill not weto or in any vay interfere mit der Pill for der abbrobriation to viden Fifty-ninth Street?" His eyes are greedy as he asks.

"What is the amount of the appropriation?" she says; her hands shake, but her voice does not.

"Twelf millions," says the little gentleman glibly,

rolling it off his lips as if a slice of it already tasted agreeably to him.

Mrs. Duane's eyebrows lift. "Twelve millions to widen three blocks, for if I understand correctly that amount is to be asked for that proportion of the street?"

"Yes, Matame. But gonsider," he says it with a soothing, coaxing accent, at once charming and engaging. "The broberdy owners must be reimbursed for deir ingonwenience und loss."

"How much of the twelve millions will that take?"

"Ah, Matame is verry fine pusiness lady!" exclaims the German-American, with undisguised and intentional admiration.

Marjorie laughed. It was a purely nervous laugh, but it sounded in the ears of the Democratic Chairman like the laugh of an excellent good-fellowship. For the first moment since he had come into her presence he felt thoroughly at ease with her and as if he could speak plainly. He leaned still farther over the table which divided them, and his sharp voice lowered to a mirthful whisper as he made answer: "Joost two, Matame, joost two."

"And the other ten?" she inquires calmly and not withdrawing in her position.

"Fife to begin der real vork of videning der street," he says, with seriousness.

"The other five?" she inquires with a smile.

He hesitates just a second, only a second, as he looks at that beautiful, smiling face—a perfect mask for the loathing and disgust she feels. "Four and a half of dem, Matame, go to us—der Feenys, der McGuires, der Parley Prothers, und myself. It's all in der line of pusiness, and if ve do der city der penefit of der relief to traffic dot der videning of dot street will gonfer, surely ve are entidled to sometings." His black eyes sparkle and his ten finger-tips come together with pleasant self-approbation.

"And the other five hundred thousand?" now asks Mrs. Duane.

"Ah, Matame, ve put dot indo der gampaing, every cent of it, dot will make your respected pardner der Governor of der greatest State in der Union!" Mr. Schroeder now rises, to the occasion doubtless, and thrusts his hands in his trousers' pockets and takes a little turn about the room.

"I think, Mr. Schroeder," said Marjorie, "that I decline your proposition."

"You vhat?" almost screamed the little gentleman, returning to his chair and leaning farther than ever across the table.

"Decline your proposition."

"You mean, Matame," exclaims the quick-witted German-American, "dot you do not tink you haf sufficient influence over your huspand to induce him to further his own pest interests? Is dot it?"

The tone is as suave as a courier's always is, but the bitter, diabolical cut is there all the same.

"I mean," is the reply, "that I don't intend to try; that I would scorn for him to accept aid from a source of fraud."

"Matame!" The Democratic Chairman rises but does not stir from his position.

"I mean that I consider bribery such as you have offered to me a crime, and that I would sooner die than stoop to sell my own or my husband's honesty for that or any price."

"You can't elect him mithout us." Mr. Schroeder's tone verges closely upon the other extreme from that which he has been hitherto employing.

"We will see," is her response.

"If your huspand wetoos der Fifty-ninth Street Pill, ve'll kill him bolitically," he hisses almost in her ear over the table.

"Impossible," she says.

"Look a-here, my tear!" cries Mr. Max Schroeder, losing his grip on what Mr. McGuire would call the "tony side of life" entirely, "if you go pack on us, if you don't see, mark you, see, dot der Fifty-ninth Street Pill goes through all right, it'll all leak out somehow," he speaks with a vicious emphasis not to be misunderstood, "somehow, dot you've been drying to gorrup Tammany Hall und buy your huspand's nomination!"

"I think, Mr. Schroeder," says Marjorie, near to collapsing but not a hint of it in her bearing, "that I have the game in my hands when it comes to talking of corruption." She indicated the letter she held.

"Gif dot back to me!" he shouted as loudly as he dared.

"No, Mr. Schroeder," said Marjorie, retreating a bit.

"Gif it to me, I say, or, Got in Himmel! I'll take it!"

He makes to spring across the table at her, but she is too quick for him. Like a flash she has turned, thrust McGuire's letter into the safe, pushed it shut, and stands now with her back against the steel bulwark, shaking and looking the Democratic Chairman in the face.

"Tamn it!" he cries under his breath.

"Go!" she says, pointing to the door, and touching the button near her which would summon a servant.

CHAPTER XVII

The Deed to a Prairie

As soon as Marjorie heard the front door close she sank upon the lounge; the strain was off and the tension loosened; she felt that she could breathe once more; and presently the knowledge came to her that she had scored heavily. It was true that where she had hoped, even against hope, to make an ally, she had only aroused antagonism, but so long as she had possession of McGuire's compromising letter she knew that she held a very high trump card in her hand.

A key was now put in the latch and Billy entered the house; he came right back to the library as he usually did. He was surprised to find his wife there at all, and still more so to see her lying down. Something unusual in her air and attitude alarmed him. He crossed to her hurriedly, bent over her and then knelt beside her.

"Margie," he whispered, "aren't you well?"

"Yes, I'm well, thanks, Billy."

She did not look up at him, but she felt the tenderness in his eyes and in the eager hands that half-reluctantly sought her own.

"Your little hands are hot. You are not well, after all. I'll telephone for Doctor Carleton at once."

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" she exclaimed, laughing with her lips and eyes both; because Billy's voice was very sweet and insistent and apprehensive.

"Well, if you haven't a fever then you're awfully excited. Who's been here annoying you? Anyone?" he asks suspiciously.

"No one has annoyed me at all."

She sits up now and is almost on the point of laying her two hands on his big shoulders, and telling him everything about the McGuires and Max Schroeder and her plans for him and a thousand more and dearer things.

He is very near to taking her in his arms and begging for even a little of the old love, for lack of which he is dying now every day that he lives.

Then she suddenly remembers the year of their separation and all the new things that he drew into his career while she was absent of which she knew nothing until she came back. She is proud; she is silent.

He, at the same moment, recalls the year of separation, the letters of apparent content, her passivity when she did come, and De Barreaux. He is proud; he is silent also.

She now rose, and, with a sigh, he followed her example.

"Billy," she said, "I want to ask you something."

"Certainly; but, one moment, before I forget it: what's this I've just been reading in the paper—Mrs. Michael McGuire's name among the people you had here yesterday?" Mr. Duane pulls a paper from his pocket and hands it to his wife.

"True," she nods, glancing at the paragraph.

"That woman here?"

"Yes, she was; her husband was here last Tuesday."

"How did they get here? Who had the effrontery to bring them here?"

"I had!" she answers laughing.

"You! Child! what are you talking about? Where did you ever meet these people?"

"I called on Mrs. McGuire."

"Great Scott!" Billy falls into a chair. "What for?" he adds helplessly.

"No matter about that," she proceeds to unlock the safe and to take out Mr. McGuire's letter and put it in her pocket. "I said I wanted to ask you something."

"I know, but just wait one moment, and you shall ask me things all night if you want to. See here, my little girl," Billy reaches his arms over the table much in the same action as Mr. Schroeder.

Marjorie sat down, too, now, opposite to him.

"I'm seeing!" she smiles over at him. "Go on."

"Some of the boys have been telling me you are trying your hand at the political game; that you are ambitious and want to be the wife of the Governor of the State; is it true?" He looks at her intently. How desperately he hopes that she will stretch out her pretty arms to his and say:

"Billy, I don't care whether you're the Governor of the State or not; it's you I care about and not governors or States!" But she says nothing of this kind.

She thinks that he believes her ambitious of place and power and public opinion for herself, then? Well, so he may.

"And if I do?" she asks.

"If you do, my girl"—her heart throbbed as he uttered those two words—"if you do, won't you leave me to make the struggle for you, and just sit at home with your woman's occupations, and go out with your horses and dogs and friends and the boy and be happy, down in the country or aboard the yacht or out on the ranch, or where you will? Eh, Marjie? Let me fight the battle; I swear I'll win it for you; but don't you soil your soul and mind with such a ghastly grind as a political campaign."

She sat very still. Could she but know that he spoke from his heart? Could she but believe that it was his great care for her that inspired him? Could she but forget that year away from him? That year when no word came across the sea ever to urge her return!

She could—she would forget it all; she would run around to him and kneel down near him and feel his dear, big hands holding her close: she would be so glad to leave

the struggle with him, so glad just to be his home-woman once again. Her hand almost went out. Then she recalled the possibility of her husband's having met some one who answered certain demands of his character as fully as Isidoro De Barreaux answered some of hers. She drew back.

"Tell me you'll leave me to win out for you, Marjie? won't you? I'll try hard."

So he wanted to be indebted to her for nothing! He did not wish her to hold place or part in his triumph or his downfall. He had entered into this thing apart from her, and he wanted no interference. Could she give that up?

In one vivid flash of thought, Marjorie Duane knew that if she abandoned this excitement, this struggle and absorption, she would inevitably fall into the delicate meshes of the Hebrew musician's love.

"It's too pleasureable an occupation to abandon," she answered, lightly enough. "Since you've discovered my bent, best accept it for what it's worth and think no more about it." This was said as lightly as the beginning; she took up a magazine and turned the leaves.

"It's worth too much to me," is the answer. "You don't know what you're entering upon. I do. Is it too much to ask that you give it up?" he says, in feverish anxiety.

"For whose sake?" She smiles at him over the top of Harper's.

There was a pause. If he but dared to say "for mine" is his thought. If he could but say "for his sake!" is her thought. At last he spoke quietly, measuredly.

"For your own."

"How so?" she inquires coldly.

"It's an infernal life."

"I should say that lay with the individual," Marjorie replies.

"I mean an infernal life for you—for a woman," he says.

"Not necessarily. I think I like the little of it I know. There's a rush and strife and exhilaration and hope about it that hardly anything else possesses."

He looked at her critically. If she found so much to interest her in this perhaps then she was not interested in any person. It was a straw to catch at. Drowning men catch at straws.

When Duane saw Marjorie so near him and yet as far as if at the North Pole, he seemed to himself to be drowning.

"Ambitious little woman!" he exclaimed now with a smile.

She shrugged her shoulders. Then the eyes of husband and wife met.

"Is it a bit for—for my sake, Marjie," he whispers wildly, "that you care, dear, just a little bit?"

It was so sweet, so almost irresistible. But, pshaw! he was just grateful and trying to show it, that was all.

"Well," she answered, rising now and taking her magazine with her, "you don't suppose I'd be troubling about any other man's being made Governor, do you? Henry Hull, for example?"

She laughed. So did he; a miserable little laugh of defeat. He pulled himself together again.

"Oh, now, tell me what it is you were going to ask me when I was rude enough to stop you, when I first came in—don't you remember?" he inquires kindly.

"Oh, I wanted to ask if you don't own some land out in the western part of the State somewhere—way out?"

"No, I don't," is the answer.

"I thought you did," with an accent of grave disappointment.

"You do, though," Billy remarks, adding, "may I?" as he takes a match from the tray and a cigar from a box.

"Yes," she nods, adding, "I?" with astonishment.

"Hm-m, I deeded two thousand acres out in Erie County over to you not long ago, just outside the township limits of New Bremen," Billy says.

"Why did you do that? I never knew it."

"I know you didn't. I meant to tell you some time or other. Forgot it, I suppose."

He had hoped to tell it to her with her dear head lying on his shoulder.

"Why did you ever do it?" she persists.

"Well," he pauses to puff the smoke away in a long chain of rings. "One day, after you got back from the other side and we were tooling down to the Long Island place, and looking out over the park, you remarked that you believed you'd never be happy until you owned a prairie—you were so fond of big reaches of grass-land. Remember?"

"Yes, I do remember. I've always felt so about meadows," she replies.

"Well, the nearest I could come to a prairie was that Erie County property, so when we came back to town the following Monday I transferred it to you. The deed is in the safe there; I'll get it out for you now."

"Let it be, please," she sighs. What an exquisite thing it would be if—if he only cared for her.

But Billy crosses the room to the safe, takes out the deed, and leaning over the back of her chair lays it in her lap.

"Thank you," she says, while her eyes shine.

"Wait until you see the gift before you give thanks," is his laughing answer.

"I want to see it right away!" she says. "I want to go out there; that is the reason I asked you if you didn't own something out that way."

"Expect it's a pretty beastly hole."

"My prairie! My beautiful prairie!" aghast and laughing.

"Your prairie's all right. I meant the town, New Bremen. Poorest town, most God-forsaken spot on the face of the earth!"

"I wish to go there next week. Can you get me a special car?"

"I'll get you the Boston, the best palace car ever built. We had it, don't you recall, when—we were—married, and ran her out of Newport at one A. M." He smiles in reminiscence.

"Was that its name? Boston?"

"Yes. By the way, I'd better telephone down to the Ontario and Western now—they control it, I believe—and secure it for you at once." He goes over to the telephone and accomplishes what he wants to.

"There! That's all right. Who shall you take with you?" he asks, relighting his cigar.

"Imogene Propper and Dolly and Dickey Peavor, Lord Seaborough, Tommy and Sally, if they're home in time."

Billy's heart thumps between each name for dread and doubt lest one shall be named whom he would not have go.

"Betty Davies," Marjorie goes on, "and Phyllis Van Antwerp, and two or three more men for the girls, of course," sitting and writing out her list.

"Who?" he asks eagerly, almost harshly.

"Why, I don't know," she answers in a leisurely way, adding tentatively, "Dan can't go?"

Billy shakes his head.

"Well, let me see, I suppose Cecil Haven and—er——"

The clock strikes nine.

"Beg pardon, Mrs. Duane," the butler says, entering. "Mr. Isidoro De Barreaux is in the drawing-room."

"Oh, to be sure," she rises, the color creeping slowly into her cheeks.

Billy watches it come. Marjorie glanced at her husband.

"Say to Mr. De Barreaux that——"

The well-trained servant is at attention, but discerning enough to be closely investigating his own shoes just at this juncture.

Billy replies to his wife's glance. "If you have told De Barreaux you would be at home to him don't let me interfere with it, my dear, I beg," he says with exquisite courtesy. By heaven, he was proud as Lucifer, and would never set a pebble in the other man's path.

"Say to Mr. De Barreaux, Allison, that I will be in in a few moments."

As soon as the man had gone, she adds: "Won't you come in, too? Your friend is going to play for me. I daresay some one else will drop in before long, too."

"No, thanks," is the easy reply, as he took up the paper; "Satterlee's due any moment now, and I've a lot of routine to get through before I sleep. So long."

He rose to see her go, then sat down again with his cigar and his thoughts.

CHAPTER XVIII

Temptation

DE BARBEAUX began to play very softly before Marjorie had quitted the library. It was the action of an intimate of the house, and as he was not quite yet on just that footing it was a piece of audacity—or of impertinence—whichever way one saw fit to look at it.

Marjorie recognized the courage of the thing, but the music was so sweet and she was so lonely and tired that she did not resent, but came into the room gladly to greet him.

He did not turn around on the piano-seat at all but played on, the sweet tenseness and rhythm of the air growing each moment beneath his long, white fingers; he kept his head a little bent, too, over the key-board. Like all his race, he was gifted with consummate assurance: he had likewise immeasurable faith both in himself and in something which he called his "Destiny"; he thoroughly believed that Destiny had guided Marjorie to him at Triborg, and him to Marjorie in New York. He found the combination of her being the wife of the man against whom he bore an undying grudge a most exquisite, if enigmatic juxtaposition; it enraptured him almost as much as she herself did. He expected to win her: and into his calculations the idea of failing to acquire her love did not enter. Thus armed and equipped the Pole experienced no reluctance in using his powers and in proceeding with all that deliberation and relish which marked his character.

Marjorie, finding that he did not move, and feeling sure that he heard her footstep, stood still in the cen-

tre of the room. He played on, the air, the touch, the emphasis growing only more caressing, more seductive each moment. She drew nearer almost unconsciously; nearer yet. He was laying bare his soul to her in those incomparable, languorous melodies, those bursts of frantic passion, those uncontrolled rhapsodies of soft and thrilling tunefulness.

She knew it. She came nearer still. Brilliant, susceptible, fascinating, unhappy—such was the woman. It was not to be wondered at that every nerve in her body and brain responded to such an appeal as Isidoro De Barreaux poured forth on the piano that evening.

He played now with his right hand only, but preserving the harmony and the bewitching lilt and throb of his improvisation perfectly, while with the left he reached out and pulled near to him a little chair and drew Marjorie down on it. Neither of the two spoke a word. De Barreaux played now with both hands again. Marjorie leaned back in her seat, her eyes drooped, her hands clasped on her lap. A garden was bursting into blossom before her; a cup was being held up to her lips entwined with roses, violets, carnations; in this garden the nightingales forgot to sing as they heard the music she was listening to. Life—full, joyous, rich, tender, subduing, gorgeous—was unfolding before her, blotting out from her mind the old, bare and chilly existence. It was so delicious that it could be tasted; and so inexhaustible that it only recreated new desire by feeding on itself.

He stopped at last, turned a little, and put his hands over hers; he did not touch her, but his fingers hovered there, his mystical eyes bent questioningly upon hers.

“Play more!” Marjorie exclaimed.

He smiled. He knew that she trembled and was afraid of the outcome, and yet longed for more of the mood’s inspiration. He did as she asked.

While he was playing, she listening in the same rested

attitude as before her husband came out of the library, —Satterlee not having turned up—and crossed the hall to go upstairs. He could not help seeing them as he passed by. The inclusive security and perfect understanding of the picture graved itself in lines of steel upon his heart.

It seemed that from the very first, when they were together, they were self-sufficient and at peace and that in their calculations he had no part.

If it had been the eighteenth century instead of the twentieth doubtless blood would have spilled and a corpse have been in order before morning. As it was, Mr. Duane went to his rooms, and pride and self-control took the place of curses and rapiers.

His wife heard his step on the stair. "Stop!" she cried to De Barreaux.

He did so instantly, anticipating that she would now reply to the outcry of his heart.

"It was exquisite!" is all she says, however.

"Did you like it? Did you not understand what I tried to say to you in it?" he asks gently.

"It spoke of beautiful things," she answers evasively, adding: "Of happiness and joy."

"You have the right to happiness."

"Ah, has anyone a right to that?"

"Yes, everyone has," is the Hebrew's reply. "And I could give happiness to you. You could, yes, you have given it to me. I have seen you, you permit me to come to you. You will allow me to paint your portrait?"

"That would be delightful!" she exclaims, "for a birthday present for the Bishop, my uncle; he wants one of me!"

"Ah, so? You will, then?"

"I think so."

"Thank you," with infinite humility. "When you bring the light that never was on land or sea into my poor studio, then heaven may envy me."

His metaphor is in such entire accord with his personality and atmosphere that it does not jar or seem exaggerated in the least.

"Have you called on the Bishop yet?" she inquires, her tone now quite conversational and ordinary.

"Yes, Madame, and I was honored by having a most delightful hour with his reverence. A wonderful man, with the scope of vision and the charity generally only found, pardon me, outside of the churches!"

He begins to play a little once more, absently it would seem, but the air is the one that thrilled nearest to her heart and he knows it.

"I told you to stop," she says.

"I stop. Your word is my law."

"And now, you must go." She smiles a little.

"Already?" covering disappointment with a smile, too.

"Yes."

"I may return—when?"

"I don't know. I am going out to the western part of the State in a few days. I am taking a party and I can't tell just when we shall be back."

Of course his eyes plead to be included in that party, but she ignores the plea and puts out her hand.

He takes it, and with an irresistible and enchanting deference, with a touch of fire and a mien of faultless conventionality, he presses his lips upon it and leaves her.

CHAPTER XIX

The Negro Ex-Convict

THE next morning Mrs. Duane arose, feverish, and in haste with everything. She had fought a little battle with herself before she had slept the previous night. She needed armor—that she made up her mind to. In this era one could not put on a coat of mail, pick up a shield and go forth to the wars; but in this era one could still find a cuirass that might protect, and its name was occupation.

It is hardly to be supposed that Marjorie felt herself in imminent danger—she did not; but the fact that De Barreaux's influence over her had existence at all made its impression upon her. She experienced a sense of relief and sustainment in his presence. She had never been brought into so close contact before with the subtleties of an Oriental nature, the workings of an Oriental intention and passion.

The man's fibre and intensity, his perspicacity and gentleness all appealed to her; the contrast between this and the entire Anglo-Saxonism of her husband's nature caught her imagination, as it were, on the rebound, and, aware of this, she determined to lose herself, if she could, in something else.

In plunging deeper still into the political whirlpool, she would, she fancied, not only escape from De Barreaux's influence, but learn to forget, perhaps, the hold that Billy had upon her. She would be working for Billy and therefore there could be no harm; indeed, it would, she confessed to herself, be sweet to work for him.

All of which goes to show that she presented the anomaly—if it be one?—of a woman who cared for two men at

the same time. She said as much to herself as she drew on her gloves and impatiently left the house about ten o'clock in the morning.

"Tell Peters I could wait no longer, Allison, and that if this occurs again, I shall be obliged to really have him scolded. Tell him to follow me to 606 West Thirty-eighth Street."

Peters came with his horses at a full swing around the corner just in time to see his mistress walking quickly across, toward Broadway, where she took the up car and got out at Thirty-eighth Street before he had started in pursuit of her.

Hitherto Mrs. Duane's charities had been attended to in the gross and with cheques. Of late appeals in the papers had begun to interest her more personally; she went, frequently twice a week, to all sorts of out-of-the-way environments and ministered with her own hands and voice and cheerfulness to the desolate and afflicted.

This morning she had read of a case that was most piteous, and, glad of anything that would take her thoughts from her own affairs, she was bound now for a tenement beyond Tenth Avenue. She had very little idea of the real status of the locality, and started off briskly enough for a couple of blocks or so, rather heedless of the negroes and the whites she encountered. Finally, however, the swarm increased to a miniature mob; the windows of the tall, dingy houses were full of lolling negresses, octoroons, quadroons, mulattoes, gay with paint on their tawny cheeks and with cheap ribbons and jewelry on their necks and arms and fingers. The curb and gutter were alive with children in every stage of dress and undress and of every age and size and tint; the doorways were yawning each over its half dozen of black and yellow figures; the sidewalk was blocked completely by a crowd of negro men of the most aggressive type.

Some of the faces were those of criminals lately out of

prison; some were loathsome, horrible, greedy faces, with their lubbering lips and rolling eyes and flat nostrils quivering with excitement and viciousness.

As she approached—this dainty, high-bred, white creature, in her immaculate freshness and purity—the jeering look went round about through the crowd like a flash; it struck down from the blowsy women leaning out the windows on their red pillows, from the figures in the doorways to the men on the walk. It spoke as loudly as the words that only echo in these people's hearts.

"What's she a-doin' heah? lek to know dat! Let her jes' see we's ain't gwine ter budge fer her! No, sir-ee. Let her get froo ef she kin, or let her stay out wiv her starey white face an' her fine close! Huh! Hi! hi! hi! hi!"

"Ki! yi! yi! yi!" This, from a great, fat, half-laughing, half-drunken woman in a window, broke the silence. Every girl and child and man and woman on the block took up the cry. It was derision, defiance, impudence, insult, and, in Marjorie's astounded ears, it sounded like the shrieks of jackals.

Her first thought was that they wanted to rob her, and her hand went to her coat-pocket, instinctively, to take out and proffer the purse.

"Ki! yi! yi! yi!" came the cry, more derisive, more insulting and more brazen than at first. "Who wants you' pu's, you whitewash beauty!" screams the being at the window. "Whar you come from, ma honey gell, annyhow?"

Mrs. Duane stood still. It was amazing what a multitude of things can go through the human brain in one single second of time. She was now not afraid. She was resolute. She had prayed for opportunities to help Billy, here was one.

"Ef you want ter git froo here, Whitewash," a young quadroon leered into her face close up to her, "you'll hev ter pay toll."

"Whitewash! Whitewash! Whitewash!" yelled the community.

And no policeman was near.

"Toll you'll hev ter pay's a kiss!"

A negro, black as the ace of spades, took hold of her arm and put his face almost into hers, while his companions closed around the two—Marjorie Duane and the black man—and from each pair of ebony or mongrel lips came the scream repeated, "A kiss! a kiss! a kiss!"

She shook off his hand.

"Gentlemen!" she said, and something in that voice, that gesture, that word, made every mother's son of them step back, away from her a little; made the women at the windows draw up straight on their knees and catch their breath. "Gentlemen!" she repeated, "if a white man came through here and said to one of your wives, sisters, daughters, mothers"—her accent lingered on the last word—"what has just been said to me, what would you do to him?"

The hush was profound. The black fellow nearest her shrunk back and his friends turned away.

"You'd strike him!" she says, "and you'd be perfectly right to strike him. I think that not one of you meant me any real harm. Black men can be the most courteous men in the world."

The sidewalk was cleared. The scraps of calico at the windows were pulled together. The men were drawn up close in the doorways.

"I thank you for making way for me. I am not going far, only to 606, to see what I can do for a poor little black girl who was run over yesterday."

She heard the rumble of wheels coming toward them even as she spoke. The black ex-convict shuffled up to her, his hat in his hand.

"'Ll you forgive me?" he asks.

"Gladly," she answers, "if you'll promise to treat all women, black and white, with kindness and courtesy."

"Promise!" he says, raising his hand. "Swar I will 'fore Gawd a'mighty."

She passed on and into the tenement at the farther corner. Peters dashed up with the coupé and stopped before 606.

The ex-convict sauntered up to him and commented with knowledge and feeling upon the pair of splendid rare blue roans. He had been a coachman in Washington, a fireman on the B. and O., a car-porter, and then had stolen pearls worth thousands from a sleeper and gotten himself into Sing Sing.

"Say, boss," he asks of Peters, "whose tu'nout is this, annyhow?"

"Shure," says Peters, with some honest pride, "don't ye know? It's the Mayor-elect's, Mr. Claiborne C. Duane. That lady what wint in there is Mrs. Duane."

The darkies were now clustered around the coupé, open-mouthed.

"Gee!" exclaims the negro.

"That same," continues Peters. "And his Honor most likely goin' to run for Governor of the State, byme-by, too!"

The big black drew away, beckoning his fellows with him.

When Marjorie came out they set up a cheer that brought all the women to the windows once more and set her heart beating.

"Hurrray for de Mayor's lady! Hurrray, hurrray! hurrray fer de nex' Governor's lady. Hurrray!"

She bowed to them and thanked them.

"What's your name, my man?" she asked the ex-convict.

"Ma name's Henry Johnson, ma'am, ma name is. I ain't fit to speak to you, I isn't. I's jes' from State's prison, I is," he says sheepishly, while his mates grin and gape.

"No matter about the past," is Mrs. Duane's answer.

"You've left all that behind you," she looks at him keenly. "You've got a future, Henry Johnson, just the same as any man here," glancing at the crowd. "It rests with you whether you make it a clean future or not, that's the thing."

"C'yant git nothin' to do," he says doggedly, adding: "Been out two monfs now. Nobody'll trus' me."

"I will," Marjorie says promptly.

"You!"

"Yes. Come down to the house on Madison Avenue," she takes a card from her case and gives it to him, "tomorrow between eleven and twelve."

The black man said nothing but his face was as the face of the transfigured.

And as the coupé drove away a great, strange silence fell upon the foul and vicious place.

CHAPTER XX

The Twelve Million Compromise

"Ah, ye fool, ye!" exclaims McGuire as he strikes the ash from his big cigar, sticks it between his teeth, pushes his hands in his pockets and stands with his back to the stove in his dining-room. The encouraging remark he has just enunciated is addressed to Mr. Schroeder, who has but now confided to his master the fact that Mrs. Duane is not a lady to be dealt with. "Bad luck to her! and you, too. Why didn't ye come around her?" he asks savagely.

"Yes, ach! und get myself come aaround, too!"

"Where's your tomfoolery goin' to take me? I'd like ter know that?" inquires Mr. McGuire. "Where's me letther? You didn't lave it wid her?"

"Am I a fool or ain't I?" questions Max. "Der led-der is destroyed."

"You wid yer palaverin' tongue and yer edjercation! I thought ye were the wan that was goin' to get the whip-hand of the four hundred and put 'em roight in line." Mr. McGuire's tone is exasperatingly contemptuous.

"Ach, hold your tongue, will you!" ejaculates the ex-courier.

"What fer? Why should I hould me tongue? What was it given me fer if not to make good use of it? I'll talk as long as I loike, and I'll be afther layin' this whole damn business before the Boord."

"Yes, I vould!" sneers the Chairman, in his turn. "But I'll tell um der gontents of yer ledder!"

"In sacret session," amends the Alderman. "Go on

wid yer," he adds, surveying his comrade. "What have ye got up yer sleeve? I see by the looks av ye it's something. Out wid it!"

"Have you got drough jawing me?" inquires the Democratic Chairman ironically.

"Yep, fer the prisint," is the reply. "Hould on a bit, here's Tim Feeny and Johnny Parley. They might as well hear what ye've got to say, too."

The two men named entered the room and nodded to the occupants, took off their hats and coats and lighted cigars.

"Go on!" commands McGuire.

"Dey know about der lady alreaty," says Mr. Schroeder.

Feeny and Parley wag their heads. One was tall and flopping and loose in his garments; the other rotund and short, and everything he had on, himself included, looked habitually tight.

"Well, thin, go on!" roars the host.

"Nodwithstanding der lady, we've god 'em!" says Schroeder with an air of pride.

"Ah, what are ye givin' us?" demands Mr. Parley with a gloomy air.

"Oime givin' ye this!" says McGuire, taking a whiskey flash from the sideboard and pushing glasses across the table.

They all drank, Schroeder sparingly.

"Now, shentlemen," he continues, "I claim dot we've god 'em."

"Where did I hear that before?" asks McGuire, rubbing his head.

"Whad do you glaim?" inquires Max, taking no notice of McGuire's facetious interruption. "Tell me dot!"

"We claim," exclaims Parley, setting down his glass with a rattle, "that you're a damn fake and hev got us inter throuble."

"And we claim thet the Republicans hev bought us out from you!" adds Mr. Parley doggedly.

"Vhat!" Max Schroeder springs to his feet.

"Aisy, now, b'ys," says McGuire. "Let Maxie have his say."

"I never solt a frient to an enemy and never vill!" cries Schroeder, in the tones he is accustomed to using when engaged in public speaking, and he even pauses now for the round of applause which usually crowns such forensic efforts.

"If you like id bedder, I can say it dis vay. Dot wife of der Mayor-elect's is aboud der gleverest member of her husband's barty, and I don't know bud she is der gleverest member of our barty, too."

"What do ye mane, Max?" inquires Feeny.

"I mean we're a-going to have her coöperation and we're a-going to have Duane's signature to der Fifty-ninth Street deal."

"Yis," murmurs Parley, starting a fresh cigar. "We're a-goin' to hev Ramapo water, too! whin we git it."

They all laugh.

"Look-a-here," says Schroeder, sitting up close to the table. "My bolicy's dis: When I see a good thing lying aound in anodder feller's yard, I dry to make it mine. I dry to use gonciliation—vhat ve call in Europe diblomacy."

"Do ye now?" says Feeny, inclined to be sarcastic.

"Ve vant twelve millions all dold for der job, for der broberthy-owners und for ourselves, don't ve?"

"Yep," assent the trio.

"Vell, listen, ve'll make it five millions und I'll bet my life Duane 'll sign it. I'll go up and abologize to her and she'll be quick enough to see der adwantage of hav-ing us on her side!" Schroeder's eyes sparkle and all his finger-tips come together.

"Foive millions only!" says little Feeny, in evident disgust.

"Where do we all coome in, me b'y?" inquires Parley gloomily.

"Let him finish!" says McGuire. "Maxie ain't no fool, afther all, and if we can thrap the Mayor-elect's lady I'm thinkin' we'll be damn loocky."

"So ve vill," asserts Schroeder, with a wink. "Listen, ve'll set aside von million for der broberty-owners," continues Mr. Schroeder blandly, "and tree for der vork."

"Gee! what did I tell you?" cries Parley. "You're lavin' us all out of it."

"You're turnin' honest now, ain't yer?" inquires Feeny.

"Max, I guess we'll be afther orderin' yer shroud. What do ye mane by sich foolish talk as the like of that?" Mr. McGuire's tone is bantering and humoring.

"I mean," is the reply, with a wink first in one eye, then the other, "I mean, shentlemen, ve'll nod have to bay der broberty-owners a cent; ve'll agree to, dot's all!"

"Ah—h!" This derisively from the trio.

"Ve von't begin der job, ve von't expent a tollar of der abbrobriation except for der Bress und——"

"Advertising for sealed proposals, ye mane, is it?" interrupts McGuire.

"Yes, joost so. Afder der engineers have all submid-ded deir blans und esdimades ve'll deliberate; der board vill deliberate; der madder vill lie over until der next meeding; it'll go on lying over, it'll be forgotten, it'll drob out." Max Schroeder is growing excited as he notes that his auditors are in sympathy—at least the majority are.

"There's only wan objection," remarks McGuire. "Are ye sure that the bottom of the opposition's mimories'll dhrop out, too?"

"Von't it, dough," exclaims Schroeder, "vhen C. C. Duane is elected Governor of der Stade of New York!"

"There y'are!" cries McGuire to his relatives and

patting the Democratic Chairman on the back. "I tould yez Maxie was oop to snuff."

"Leave it to me," says Schroeder.

"O.K.," says Parley, and Feeny now endorses his companions.

"I wouldn't underdake to elect any man for Governor of dis State dot dat liddle lady up dere on Matison Avenue vas obbosed to!" says Mr. Schroeder.

"She's a daisy!" says McGuire.

"A peach from all I've heard!" remarks Feeny, pouring another glass.

"An apple, I should say!" Mr. Parley sighs, pouring, too. "Fer, from all accounts, she's the most timpting wan of her sex since Aive held out that fruit toward Adam."

"Dot's so!" cries Schroeder. "She got der best of Max Schroeder, but py heafens! you see, I tink in der ent Max Schroeder'll get der best of her. Five millions best."

"Duane'll be Governor, sure." This from McGuire.

"Hinery Hull ain't in the running now."

"Nope," says Feeny. "She's makin' points iverywhere. Thanksgivin' parties out at the Mills, and ivery wan crazy about her, Hull's people as well as their own."

"Yes, she's makin' points, black vons as vell as vite vons," Schroeder pulls the evening paper from his pocket and reads aloud the account of Marjorie's Thirty-eighth Street experience. The three other men nod as he concludes.

"There's the nigger vote fer ye!" says McGuire sitting down.

"Dot story goes indo six tousant newsbabers before you're a veek older!" says Schroeder excitedly. "My son says der syndicate's got it. Dere isn't a black or a negroid greature from Maine to der Klontike dot von't read it. Ain't I der vise jay to dry to cage a running mate like dot, eh?" inquires the ex-courier.

"Ye are," assents Parley.

"Oh, ye're the nate wan," says Feeny, pouring another glass.

"I saw Zatterlee joost now at headquarters," continues Schroeder.

McGuire looks up sharply.

"Mrs. Duane leaves day after do-morrow on her private car mit a barty for a trip to der vestern part of der State."

"Sure, what'll she do out there?" inquires Feeny, a little thickly.

"Do!" echoes McGuire in scorn of his respected brother-in-law's stupidity. "She'll 'do' thim all, intirely. That's what she's goin' fer, to 'do.' To dine 'em and faste 'em and compliment 'em, and git their votes."

"Right you are!" Mr. Schroeder nods approvingly to Mr. McGuire.

"What newspaper min is she takin' along wid her?" inquires Alderman McGuire.

"Ah—h, Himmel! but she's fit to be a qveen! She's got a heat! She's taking Miss Eva Elliott, der octo-roon——"

McGuire nods sagely and interrupts, "There you are agin wid yer nigger vote! Gee!" He rises and takes a turn up the room.

"And der odder is Eltzer, a German-American. Ain't she smart?"

"Begorra! she is that same, fer there's an awful lot av German people settled out there in Erie County. I know that."

"Duane owns der down breddy nearly out dere," says Schroeder.

"What town?" asks Parley. Feeny is asleep.

"New Premen; or, radder, his vife owns it now. I vas down at der City Hall lately looking up his real estate und I find he deeded two tousand agres, including

der most bart of New Premen, to her, some little while pack."

"Sure, you're the weasel!" laughs McGuire.

"Maxie's the fox!" exclaims Parley.

"When a man occubies a bosition of trust," remarks Mr. Schroeder, with some dignity and considerable feeling, "it is his dudy to his barty und to der public whom he serves to acquaind himself mit all der affairs of his obbonents, und his colleagues as vell, dot he can bossibly get at!"

"Here's to our new colleague!" cries McGuire.

"Wake up, Feeny!" administering no gentle tap to his relative and fellow-Alderman.

"Here's to her!" says Parley.

"Here's to her or anybody else!" shouts Mr. Feeny, filling once more.

"Here's to Duane's vife und der five millions!" Schroeder laughs immoderately; he is intensely pleased to think how he has avoided telling about the letter.

They all laugh. And presently they all go down in the saloon and drink more.

CHAPTER XXI

Good-bye, Sweetheart

It had been Dan Satterlee's suggestion that Eva Elliott should be one of the two reporters allowed to accompany the party.

"Marjie," he said, "if you are bound to go into this thing, I'll give you every point there is—this octoroon girl is one of them; we can't afford to despise the black vote and I'd recommend you to let her go."

"Very well," Marjie says, "she shall go. The negroes are unpleasant to me, personally, in any but a menial capacity—there I like them. But I can put aside my personal feelings and take her."

"She is a member of the Afro-American Equal Rights League of the State of New York," says Dan, "very clever and already devoted to you!"

"Why?" with surprise. "She never saw me."

"No, but there's always Henry Johnson, lately from Sing Sing!" is the smiling rejoinder.

"To be sure. I must not forget my promise. Where's Billy, do you know?"

"Upstairs. I just saw him come in."

She ran up and told the story of the Thirty-eighth Street encounter briefly to her husband.

"I know it already from the papers," Billy says, looking at her steadily. "Ah, Marjie!" She hung her head. He came up to her and put a hand on either shoulder.

"Do you want to go on this pace?" he asks earnestly.

"Yes," she replies, "I do." There is no hint of tenderness in her face or voice. She felt too deeply to allow it to be seen.

He turned off. "What'll I do for Johnson?"

"What do you think would be best?" she asks reflectively, composing herself entirely. Billy turns squarely to her.

"What do I think would be best!" he echoes. "A cowhiding and a return ticket to prison. The brute! To speak so to you! to dare to touch—you!" There is worship in his voice.

"One must make allowances," she says, flushing with pleasure at his tone. But then Billy would have been in a rage for the sake of any other woman in the world in that sort of a position.

"Well," he remarks, "command me and I'll obey."

"Give him a place on the railway somewhere, far off, and tell him that I am becoming personally responsible for his good behaviour, will you?"

"I will. I'll pack him off this very night to California."

"Thank you," she says simply, and goes away to make preparations for her own departure. The Erie County expedition was to start that evening at eight. Billy met them at the Grand Central to see them off. As the people kept arriving one by one or in twos, his pulse throbbed and his color rose. Would De Barreaux be one of his wife's guests or would he not? He had never asked for a list.

"Let me see!" cried Marjie, counting them off on her fingers, "are we all here? Sal, Tommy, Dick, Imogene, Dolly, Lord Seaborough, Mr. Clarke, Gerry Knox, Betty, Phyllis, Mr. Haven!"

"Present!" they all cry out with one accord.

"Are Miss Elliott and Mr. Eltzer aboard?" she asks of her husband, "and the servants?"

"Yes. Comfortable as possible. The Amaryllis is

almost as good a car as this one," is the answer. "Sure your people are here?" he adds, with a smile.

"Yes, everyone. Only wish your affairs would let you go, too," she says gayly.

"Impossible," is the reply, adding a little wistfully, for her alone to hear, "would you have liked me to go?"

"To be sure!" is the clear and high reply. "Some of my methods of stumping the State might not meet with your approval, still, I'd not object to my candidate's presence!" she laughs.

Her hands are in his. The engine bell is ringing. Was there or was there not a little bit of tender emphasis on those two words, "My candidate"? The wheels of the Boston begin to turn, the first bomb goes off with a resounding whack that makes them all jump.

Billy bends over his wife and kisses her. "I wish I were really your candidate!" he whispers wistfully, then quickly adds, "Good-bye, Sweetheart!" And Mr. Duane is off the car and stands on the platform until the train is out of sight.

He is almost happy and quite light-hearted as he jumps into a cab and drives down to the house. Isidoro De Barreaux was not one of the expedition.

CHAPTER XXII

New Bremen, Erie Co., N. Y.

THE Boston slowed into the yard at New Bremen at five o'clock the following morning. Everyone rose early and they breakfasted on board. Thereafter Marjie put the town and the one livery stable in it at the disposal of her guests, leaving Miss Elliott to join them, while she took Eltzer with her and Tommy Eckford.

"Sally'll have to exist without you, dear brother-in-law, for a while," says Sally's sister.

"Indeed, she'll probably be glad to be rid of me!" says the new husband ruefully.

"Tommy!" This the bride reproachfully.

"She needs a little change!" cries Gerry Knox.

"She most likely needs a big cheque, being a woman!" says Dolly.

"Any woman with the bit between her teeth, as brides always have, needs a check!" calls out Seaborough.

"'Bit!' bit of what?" inquires Betty.

"Twenty-six bits of pearl!" cries Tommy, embracing his spouse.

"Tommy!" This the bride remonstrant.

"Come off, Romeo!" ejaculates Dolly.

"I'd rather come on!" responds Tommy, turning to catch Miss Dolly, who repulses him with the severity found nowhere so severe as in fifteen.

"And you, too, Dolly!" Tommy says sadly.

"I'm not two," is the Child's reply, "I'm only one."

"Make me the half of that one," whispers Seaborough in her ear.

"Which half was it that won?" asks Dolly, and then they all set to work to decide how they shall spend their first day in New Bremen.

Marjorie stood on the platform of the Boston and surveyed the scene.

New Bremen was a junction, and the "yard," as it was called—principally, very likely, because it bore no resemblance to a yard at all—was acres wide, a stretching and intricate network of glistening, oily tracks; beyond these, at one side, the wide, bleak, December meadows of the farming lands—the "prairie" that Billy had deeded to her. At the hither side lay the town built down close to the railway, the garden places of the rows of little cottages creeping up to the tracks. At the right hand stood the great brick woollen mill. At the left the brick hotel.

"Hotel B. Dunster" stared at her in blue letters from the gaunt sign above the bar. Beyond it a little way she saw two spires; evidently there were churches in New Bremen.

There was a town-hall, too; she saw its cupola and the big clock face between the bare branches of the beautiful elms. The clock now began to strike the hour of nine, clear, high, piercing strokes. The two churches had clocks as well, for these struck also the relentless nine. There was clearly a school, too, in New Bremen, for no sooner had the churches and the town-hall fulfilled their mission of striking, than a bell jangled out in screaming defiance of the natural history of the human ear-drum. The factory bell took a hand, or at least a tongue, in the business, likewise the factory steam whistle; then most of the engines in the "yard" joined in this horrible chorus, and with their several bells, steam whistles and throttles swelled the disturbance to the height of a small pandemonium.

Marjorie paused a moment, and then she turned and asked Tommy Eckford to go into the town and find a

bell-hanger or jeweller or any sort of man that could attend to bells and clocks.

Tommy, nothing loath for anything, and believing secretly that he could discover Sally somewhere about, started on his mission, while the bells and whistles kept it up.

"Send him to me to the hotel over there this evening, please, Tommy dear," she says.

"All right," sings out Mr. Eckford. Then she asked Mr. Eltzer if he didn't think it would be best for him to seek out the local newspaper. He did think so and went away to do it. Still the bells and whistles kept it up.

Mrs. Duane, after these sounds had ceased, or nearly so—for the engines went on at the sweet will of the engineers throughout the day—Mrs. Duane, unattended, walked over to the uncompromising looking "Hotel." The proprietor advanced to meet the new and unexpected arrival. She engaged some rooms and sat down in the parlor. A child of ten was beating a piano while two others sprawled before the stove.

"I ain't really perpared for no one," the man says, with a wan smile. "M' wife, she's down with nervous prostration, she is," nodding toward a door.

Marjorie looked sympathetic but was discreetly silent.

"Dunno what's the matter with the women-folks nowadays. They seem to be all made up"—he paused to cough, while Marjorie mentally said, "Not out here, I hope!"—"made up out of nerves," adds Mr. Dunster. "Now m' wife she can't stan' no noise nohow!"

"Indeed!" said Marjorie, regarding the piano with surprise, which is duly mistaken for admiration of the performance.

"Thet thar leetle gal o' our'n," says the hotel man, "'s pretty smart now, for her years, ain't she? Plays putty well, don't you say so?"

"No," says Marjorie, "I can't say that!"

"Want ter know!" exclaims the parent, while the

child halts at its noise. "'N her mar an' me we bribe her ter git her to practise: ben a-bribin' of her now fer two years. She hates it, don't yer, Annie?" Annie nods vigorously and takes occasion to mercifully cease.

"If your wife has nervous prostration," remarks Mrs. Duane, "I should think, between that piano and all the bells in this town, she would soon die."

"Yep," nods the hotel man mournfully, "thet's so. Mar, she says, says she, 'par, ef them ar bells and whustlees keep up much longer I shell give up.' She didn't use to hev no sich tantrums when we was livin' on the farm," he adds regretfully, poking the fire.

"What did you pay for that piano?" asks Mrs. Duane.

"Two hundred and twenty-five dollars," with pride.

"I'll buy it of you for the same sum."

The child begins to dance up and down.

"Will yer?" the man's eyes glisten. He is poor and behindhand. "Oh, yer don't mean it—yer a-guyin' me."

"No, I'm not. Ready money, or, at least," she adds, "my cheque. I am Mrs. Duane, C. C. Duane's wife. I own New Bremen mostly now, and two thousand acres beyond the town limit. Will you accept my cheque?"

"Wall, I swan! Now mar, she will be glad to sell thet thar darn thing, only," he adds slowly, "we been a-payin' ten dollars a quarter fer two years fer Annie's music lessons, we hev."

She takes her cheque-book out of her bag and writes out the amount.

"Better send it over to the bank," she suggests, "and get it certified before you deliver the piano! Mr. Duane telegraphed on a deposit for me to them yesterday."

Mr. Dunster eyed her curiously. "Would yer mind," he says, "marm, lettin' me know what you're a-goin' to do with thet thar pianner?"

"I'm going to burn it up," is the prompt reply, at which Annie began to dance at an accelerated speed.

"Want ter know!" exclaims her host.

"Well," she answers, "if you do want to know, I'm quite willing to tell you. I'm going to make this town a quiet, livable place, if I can. I'm going to do all I can to help the people and the place. Just attend to your cheque, please, and then send in three or four strong men and show them where they can put that piano and break it up with a couple of axes and set fire to it."

Mr. Dunster gasped. That piano that had cost so much scraping and pinching. "P'raps," he murmured, "somebody else in town what ain't got nervous prostration might buy it, and be glad to."

Mrs. Duane shook her head. "No," she answers. "A piano, I think, should be isolated just as much as a case of small-pox, and only those who are immune go near it."

"Do ye, now?" he says solemnly.

"Yes, I do. Pianos have done more harm"—at that moment De Barreaux occurs to her, and she pauses just a second and smiles—"than good. A hotel-keeper should always recollect that while one guest is thumping on a piano he provides, at least ten up to a hundred are wishing it had never been bought."

Mr. Dunster sent the cheque over to the bank and got his money. He was a shrewd, practical, but unsuccessful man. Then they took the piano out and burned it. And Mrs. Dunster sat up in bed and clasped her hands with frantic joy, and many of her tortured neighbors sympathized with her emotions. And the fame and news of this extraordinary lady from New York spread like wildfire over the town.

"Is there a sign-painter in town, Mr. Dunster?" inquired Marjie, when the fire was well started.

"Yes, marm, Tom Wilkes."

"Send for Mr. Wilkes, please."

Mr. Wilkes came.

"Now, Mr. Wilkes, I want you to paint the nicest

sign you can, just the width of this house-front; paint it 'The Governor's Hotel,' will you? and have it put up as soon as you can, and send me the bill."

He certainly would. He did. It was in place the next night at six.

"Now, Mr. Dunster," said Marjorie, "can you guess why I've named the house that way?"

"Kinder kin," says the man, with twinkling eyes. "You own it; you kin do as you blamed please."

"But the reason?" persists she.

"'Cause Mr. Duane's goin' ter run?"

"Not away, I trust?" she laughs.

"No, marm! Right inter the Capitol at Albany, you bet! Wall, marm, you're—if you'll excuse me sayin' it—you're a fit runnin' mate fer the President of the United States! Blame me, ef you ain't but jist come inter this here town this very mornin'. 'Tain't noon yet, and——"

"We've lighted the first bonfire and ordered the first banner for the next Governor, haven't we, Mr. Dunster?"

"Gosh! we hev! An' mar, she's a settin' up in her night-gown in the rockin'-chair and knittin' real smart, she is, a'ready."

"Have you an architect here in New Bremen?" asks Marjorie.

"Oh, yes, marm, real smart young feller, too; parson's son; slaved himself most ter death workin' his way through college, and now he's to hum without a job. Lem Smith's a genus, that's what he is!"

"Send him to me, will you, Mr. Dunster?"

"Right along now, marm, sure."

When Lem Smith, the parson's son, comes, Mrs. Duane, after a little chat with him and on finding him to be what the hotel man calls "a genus," asked him to bring her, as soon as he could, his plans for a large country house, in the English style, with rooms for at least

forty guests beside the complement usual for a family; with a swimming-pool and ball- and billiard-room annex, and with stables for thirty horses and six ponies.

"I am going to build a house, after I have selected the site, Mr. Smith, out here in Erie County, and I intend everything in and about it, from the architect down to the cement for the cellar, to come from Erie County. Can it be done?"

"Yes, it could," he thought.

"Is there a landscape-gardener here?"

"Yes, there was most anything and anybody in New Bremen, and the only difficulty was they were all idle, all poor, and no one stopped who had money enough to get away."

"We'll change all that if we can!" said Marjorie blithely. "Send me your friend, the landscape-gardener, to-morrow morning at ten, please."

By this time they had dinner. The whole party came over to the hotel for the meal, and it was whispered to Marjorie that Mrs. Dunster had so far recovered already as to have presided over the fried chickens and cream in person.

They were a jolly lot and ate their rations from pound-weight plates, and with steel forks and knives with as huge a relish and in as merry a mood as ever they had at the Waldorf. When they were rising from the feast, Seaborough and Gerry Knox found themselves tied fast in their chairs with napkins around their elbows.

Dolly, sly puss, had done it. While the men wriggled and the girls shrieked with foolish but delightful mirth, Dolly said:

"Papa taught me that trick; he learned it from an East Indian magician."

Imogene frowned. Dolly never hesitated to mention her papa when she saw fit. Dolly never hesitated at anything.

"Children are a questionable blessing to have

around!" says Gerry Knox striving to extricate himself, while Seaborough, more good-humoredly, did the same.

"No blessing at all!" remarks Dolly. "I've always"—("always" is so pat on the lips of fifteen)—"said that children were the cause of more marital misery than anything else!"

"How do you make that out, Miss Dolly?" inquires Woodward Clarke with amusement.

"Look at us," indicating her sister. "If papa and mama hadn't had Imogene and me, there would have been no trouble at all. When we came along there wasn't money enough to go around, and there you are; the lack of money, not the love of it, is the root of all evil! 'And the first little pledge is the first parting wedge'!" sings the Child, waltzing around the room, and eluding Lord Seaborough's attempt to detain her with his one liberated arm.

"Come, help me untie this knot, please, Miss Dolly. It'll take me an hour to do it alone," he pleaded.

"I know where they'll untie any knot in five minutes! I do!" cries the girl.

"Where? where?" comes in a chorus.

"Chicago!" is the reply, and they all set up a shout as Seaborough and Knox finally do get unfastened.

"Well, it's taken me, at the least computation and judging from the way I feel, nine hundred and ninety-nine hours, ninety minutes and nine million seconds to get that inf—I mean blessed knot undone!" says Gerry pettishly.

"Jove! but you're quick at putting out figures, Knox!" remarks Tommy Eckford.

"Quick at taking them in!" chimes Phyllis.

"Of course he is, very!" says the Child. "Mr. Knox knows at sight whether a girl's waist measures eighteen or twenty-six. Ta-ta!" she carols back to them as she is dancing out of the room, Seaborough close in her wake.

“What’s going on now, ladies?” inquires Dick, who has been off with Imogene in a corner, as he apparently wakes up.

“Nothing more!” Dolly calls back as she disappears, “until we put on our night-gowns!”

CHAPTER XXIII

The Bells of New Bremen

MARJORIE's next move was to send for the three physicians of the place: the homeopathist, the allopathist, and the eclectic. In a concise, perhaps abrupt, fashion, she laid before them not only her own ideas on the subject of Noise, but those of some of the leading scientific men of Europe and America. These she had collected from newspapers and had pasted in a scrap-book.

"Oh, gentlemen!" she cried, "just look at the American faces, I mean the faces of those who live in the noisy parts of town, cities, villages. Think of living in such a riot of din."

"They become accustomed to it, Madam," is the eclectic's answer.

"But they should not 'become accustomed' to it!" Mrs. Duane says warmly. "Do you live where you can hear all the jangle of the bells and whistles of this place? any of you?"

All three shook their heads.

"Why not?" she asks, with quiet directness. There is a pause. Marjorie is the one to break it.

"Because you are three men with average common-sense, and not one of you could stand the strain that is being put needlessly upon the people of this town—of every town throughout the country."

"Remember, Mrs. Duane, that temperaments differ, and that those of the educated and refined are more susceptible than those of the masses, possibly!" remarks the allopathist somewhat dogmatically.

"Absurd!" is Mrs. Duane's reply. "This poor woman here in this house has neither education nor refinement to an abnormal extent, and yet she is dying from sheer stress of Noise."

"Well," exclaims the homeopathic gentleman, with a final air, "what are you going to do about it? What can be done? Nothing. The church and school and engine bells must ring, the clocks must strike, the factory and train bells must jingle, pianos must be played. It will be the survival of the fittest, civilization must go on. Progress cannot be arbitrarily arrested to meet the views of invalids, cranks, and even of a Mrs. Duane!" with a profoundly admiring bow.

This gentleman was president of the town, chairman of the local Board, a director in the mills, proprietor of the newspaper, a warden of the larger church, and school trustee, in addition to his chosen profession.

"I think, doctor, that progress will be 'arbitrarily arrested' in this case," is the smiling rejoinder. "I had hoped to have your learned coöperation," including all three in a sweeping and fascinating smile, "but since you can't agree with me, it must be a case of stopping civilization."

Deprecatory wavings of three pairs of hands, fumbings with the scrap-book, exchange of glances.

"Time is necessary for reflection, comparison, deliberation," says the allopathist loftily.

"Nothing done in haste ever amounts to anything," coincides the eclectic pompously.

"Does it not?" says Marjorie. "Well, there is no rule without an exception, you know! I am sorry you don't agree with me, but so long as there is one, mind you, one, human being crying out in the pain and misery of noise-tortured nerves in this place there is no time for deliberation."

They all look at her aghast. It appears to them near the point of ludicrousness. She is so slight, so young,

so buoyed with honest enthusiasm, so earnest, so headlong.

Marjorie, spurred by her own perplexities, had rushed into this crusade, not at all calculating on what she was doing. Politics had been the theme; her husband's ultimate success the goal, her own unhappy state the goad. Now, the wrongs and evils and cruelties she had always noted struck home to her very soul. She had the power in her own hands, why not use it? Billy would not object. She would use it. She practically owned the town; she would stop at nothing. She would do some good—help some one to a happier estate in this world. To do this was now uppermost in her mind; the Governorship was secondary. And the wild unrest of her own heart urged her to a feverish haste in all she undertook.

"No time at all," she reiterated. "I shall have a clocksmith remove the striking apparatus from the clocks in the two churches, the town-hall, and the school-house within twenty-four hours. The bells in the churches will either come down or only ring for five minutes each on Sunday mornings; the factory whistle will not sound at any time."

"But, Mrs. Duane, consider the operatives!" protested the director in the mills; "they will not know when to get up or when to go to work or to cease from labor."

"Nonsense, sir!" is Mrs. Duane's laughing reply. "I'll guarantee there isn't an operative's family in New Bremen without a clock or a watch. And," she adds, with a curious purposefulness in her sweet voice, "I don't quite see why mill operatives need the lash of a whistle any more than the thousands of doctors, lawyers, tradesmen, teachers, and minor employees of the public. They are human beings," she says, "just as much as you are, and quite as likely to rise. You take care to live where you can't hear their whistle. Tell me how they need it any more than you?"

The eclectic shook his head ; he was shocked and showed it.

The homeopathist said with a surprised air, "Madam, I fear you are a fanatic."

The allopathist spoke quietly, "Mrs. Duane, pardon me, but you can't do it."

"I can and I will," she says as quietly. "I own the two churches. Mr. Duane gave the land, but the buildings were mortgaged to him at their full valuation. Not a cent has ever been paid ; he has never pressed the matter and even the interest has remained a dead letter. I own the mills. The building is used by the company at the nominal rental of a percentage only ; there are no clauses as to duration, there is no lease. Mr. Duane has consistently waived his percentage from the start ; his object was to help the town. I own the town-hall, free and clear of any impediment. No rental has ever been exacted for its use, none ever will be. Mr. Duane paid for all the bells there are in the place, including the school-house bell, which will come down also."

"My dear Madam, in the matter of real estate husband and wife are not one," remarks the homeopathist, who is the least bewildered of the three.

"Certainly not," is the answer. "Mr. Duane deeded all his Erie County property to me some time since. You will doubtless find it recorded in the clerk's office."

These gentlemen took their leave in silence.

Marjorie had a harder time with the dominies. Their beloved bells ! The sweet, silvery tones—the Sabbath's own voice calling their flocks to come to the House of the Lord !

"Yes," said Marjorie. "I know it sounds beautifully, Mr. Smith, but the real practical state of the case is that very many of the flock are kept ill at home with strained and cracking nerves by these very silvery tones !"

"It might be that there were one, or two, so unfor-

tunate—or, in charity, it was said, so cranky—by this cause, but was one person, or even two, or a dozen, for a whim, to deprive the community of the blessing of the bells? ”

“ Yes,” said Marjorie cheerfully. “ I own the bells. They are coming down, and going to be melted up for a statue for a fountain—all of them. And, I take it, there is harm and unchristian dealing in any sort of noise that keeps one person away from church, or from the discharge of week-day duties, or from enjoying their lives in peace and quiet.”

The school dignitaries fought for their bell. The musical, merry jingle summoning the little ones to their studies, the cheery chiming that called them six times a week!

“ Pardon me,” said Mrs. Duane, “ you ring that bell eight times every day, except Saturday, between a quarter before nine and three, and the noise is enough to drive a sane child insane. It must come down.”

In twenty-four hours all the bells and mill whistling in New Bremen stopped. Within that time Mrs. Duane had offers of eleven pianos at less than cost, and telegrams from fifteen factory towns in Erie and Schoharie counties inviting her to come and inaugurate Anti-Noise Crusades for them.

Eva Elliott and Eltzer were kept busy at the 'phones and wires, and by the middle of the week the New York papers were full of Marjorie's western trip, and every village paper in the State was setting up type of her record in New Bremen for publication on the Saturday.

CHAPTER XXIV

Over in the Engine-Yard with "Susie"

"WHAT are you going to do this morning, Marjie?" asked Imogene on Friday at the breakfast-table.

"You people are all to have a coach ride to the quarry and the sand-pit," is the answer. "I can't go myself, but Mr. Lemuel Smith will be the guide. I want you to see where some of the building materials for Duane Manor are coming from."

"Why can't you go, Mrs. Duane," inquires Cecil Haven, "if one is not asking too much?"

"I'm going across yonder to visit the engine-yard," is the answer.

As soon as she had seen the party off, piled on top and inside of the queer, lumbering, old-fashioned vehicle, tooled by landlord Dunster himself, Marjorie crossed over to the yard. Most of the men knew her by sight by this time, but not all. She went up to a big engine that was being watered, and stood contemplating it while the engineer amused himself by forcing a series of unearthly shrieks from its grimy, gigantic throat. At last he seemed to grow weary of this pastime, and vouchsafed a glance down, out the caboose window, at Mrs. Duane.

"Will you allow me to get in there for a little while?" she asks timidly.

His cap was off in an instant. "Not allowed, marm," is the reply.

"I've a pass for it," she says, presenting one from the president of the road entitling the bearer to ride in any caboose, car, or engine on the road.

"That's all right, then, marm. Newspaper lady, I

suppose? Kinder grimy like up here," assisting her in. "What paper might I ask, if it ain't bein' too bold?"

"No paper," says Marjie, with a smile.

"Well," exclaims the engineer, nonplussed. "Actress, then? Goin' to play in a railroad piece, mebbe?"

She shakes her head. "I want to talk to you a little about your engine, that's all."

"Oh, 'cause I was just a-goin' ter say I'm lyin' off with my Susie this morning, and Jim Perley he's goin' special as far as Buffalo ef you want to ride."

"No, I don't want to ride. Who's Susie? Your engine?" she asks.

He nods. "Yes, marm. Susie's No. 254. I love her. She's the biggest machine and the steadiest and the longest-winded in the service, and she's got the shriekin'est throat ever you heard." He touches the throttle and Susie emits the most terrifying yell, prolonged, hellish, and unearthly, that it is possible to imagine.

"Listen to that!" he cries with pride. "Thar ain't an engine on the whole four-track that can beat that."

"I've been listening to it for the past four nights every night about one o'clock, haven't I?" inquires Mrs. Duane pleasantly.

"Reckon you have," with delight. "You could pick out Susie from all the rest couldn't you?" triumphantly.

"I believe I could," is the reply.

"Susie's a daisy!" He pats the side of the boiler as if it were a living creature. "Now there's 356 and 42 and 210, they're all pretty good at tooting, but none of 'em aint in it with my old gal! I can make her whistle and coax and scold and cuss. Why! my best girl lives along thar by the track, and every night I'm on I make Susie tell her just what I'm a-thinkin' about. We've got a kind of code, and my girl she says it's splendid, even if it does make her head spin fit to split!"

"Yes," says Marjorie. "Then all the shrieking and

whizzing and blowing and tooting and howling that Susie and the dozen other engines make in the yard at night and in the day time is not necessary to your work, to your train service?" she asks.

"Bless you, no, marm! What an idee. We toot for comp'ny and to be sociable, and to answer each other, and to pass the time, and to see which of our gals can holler the loudest and such like. 'Necessary!' Gee! marm. Listen, I can put Susie through her paces, up and down and in and out of this yard, without no more noise than a mouse. So can any engineer that's worth his salt." The man that presides over 254 smoothes her throttle down with an oily rag and smiles complacently.

"How about the bell? What do you ring that for?" asks Mrs. Duane.

"At the road crossings, where there ain't no gates," is the response.

"Yes. I know that, but I mean when I hear them ringing for a quarter of an hour at a time, all of them that are in the yard, of a night—last night, for instance?"

"Sparring, sassing one 'nother, that's all. I claim Susie's bell's the loudest. Jim Perley, he 'lows his gal's bell can be heard furthest. I say I can keep pulling that thar rope reg'lar as a clock tick fer a longer time than he can his'n. He swars I can't—so it goes. We been keepin' up that fight now for four years."

"Yes," says Mrs. Duane, "and now it's got to stop altogether and forever."

"What's that?" gasps Susie's man.

"There can't be any more noise of any kind in the yard from today on, except what is absolutely necessary." She speaks with an air that might be described as one of innocent but incontestable authority. A tone that scarcely admitted of appeal—so much so, that for

fully two minutes by his watch the engineer stood staring at her in perfect silence.

It may be thought odd that a woman of Marjorie's position and general tastes and environments should have chosen to place herself in the caboose of a big freight engine, alone with the engineer, and to engage in conversation with him at close range. It might strike some of the people in her set that, if she did care to go about on a reformation tour, it would have been more in line to have sent written orders to the employees of the road of which her husband was president, or to have deputed to some man the task of telling the "yard" what the new rules were. But Marjorie had been somewhat under the guidance of her uncle, Gordon King. Very early in her childhood he had detected the born aristocrat, the ineffable disdain of anything or anybody that was unrefined or unclean, and had done his best to counteract it. Marjorie herself knew the defect in her own character; the unholy scorn that possessed her soul at the wrangle and twang of ungente voices, uncouth manners, dirty hands and bodies. "I know," she would say, "that their 'hearts are all in the right places,' I'm sure of it, but, oh! if they only would use soap and water every day and not roar and beat and pound everything they come in contact with!"

Conscious of her flaw, she now sought to cauterize it by contact. She believed if she only put herself right straight alongside of the people, that the inherent good in all men would soon overbalance the lack of daily or even weekly baths and the universal appetite for any sort of noisy conduct of affairs. It didn't. The loathing of the unwashed existent in some of the washed is an insurmountable sin. Marjorie committed it every day of her life, but she nevertheless persisted in the perpetration of the contact, in the vain hope that one day she would wake up regenerated.

"Well, now," ejaculated the engineer finally, "who are you, anyway?"

"I'm Mrs. Duane, the wife of the president of the road," she says simply.

His cap came off and he sprang out of the caboose on to the platform.

"I ask pardon!" he says. "I didn't know. I'm blowed if I did! And Susie ain't dressed up and shining a bit. I——"

"That's no matter," she interrupts. "I came over to talk to you myself, and to tell you about the new regulations."

"Pretty hard, marm, when a feller can't cheer himself and his mates up a bit of a dark night in winter or a hot one in summer."

"I know it seems hard," she answers. "But it's for the sake of the sick people."

"New Bremen's an awfully healthy place, Mrs. Duane!" deferentially insistent.

"I'm glad it is. But judging from all I can learn there are just as many women—and men—in it suffering from diseases brought on and fostered by noise as usually are to be found in every American town from Maine to California."

The engineer regards his visitor with undisguised curiosity.

"Now," she continues, "I want you and every man in the yard—in the service—to help me to make people better and stronger in their nerves. I want to feel when I go back to New York that the engineers of our road are to be relied on—that I can trust them to give me their aid. Won't you help me?" she asks. There wasn't a man breathing that could have resisted that look and tone from Marjorie Duane.

"S'help me Bob! I will, Mrs. Duane!"

He would have sworn to help her break up Susie if she had asked him to then and there.

"I knew it! I know every man on the road will! When his hand is tempted to the throttle to make his 'Susie' shriek, just for no cause at all, he'll pull it back and remember that somewhere there are aching, throbbing heads, cracking nerves, racked brains, no longer awakened from the little sleep they can get by his engine's voice. Won't he?"

"You bet!" is the earnest reply. "Yer see, Mrs. Duane, none of us ever thought of that. No one never said anything, and we all just went along tooting from the moment we run in the yard at the other end there, behind the jail, without no more meaning to it than children. But now, it's all dif'rent," he says seriously.

"Is there a jail here?" she asks quickly.

"Yes, marm: one pris'ner only—a French chap what tried to kill himself; out of work, a kind of a carver in wood or something of that sort."

"Hm—m—" says Marjorie musingly. "You must explain about the bells and the whistles to your best girl."

"Yes, Mrs. Duane. She'll say you're O.K., she will."

"Engaged, I suppose," she asks, drawing off her right hand glove and smiling.

"We're keepin' comp'ny," he answers sheepishly, "her and me."

"Given her a ring yet?" inquires Mrs. Duane.

"No, marm, I ain't. I'm savin' up for it though. She's a nice girl."

"Don't doubt it. Suppose you accept this, and put it on her finger the next time you see her, will you?" She slips a pretty turquoise and pearl circlet from her own finger and holds it out to him.

"Mrs. Duane!"

"Please," she says. "I should like it if you would."

"I ain't worthy. I dassn't touch anything's fine as that. From your own finger, too. My! Gee!"

She put it in his broad, rough palm.

"Je-ho-vah!" he cried. "Won't my girl just go ravin' crazy! How can I thank you?" he says, staring at her.

"By keeping Susie as still as that mouse you told me about a while ago, and now good-morning—I must go back to the hotel."

Before night Mrs. Duane received a letter, signed by all three of the physicians of New Bremen, assuring her that after due deliberation they felt positive that the changes she had made in certain matters and customs were for the best; that the procedure had, in the premises, seemed harsh and sudden, but upon investigation they were sure she was right, and begged that she would henceforth count upon their coöperation. The clergymen, too, albeit somewhat sore over their beloved—and, it must be said—rival bells, reached the same conclusion as the doctors.

Mrs. Duane set a hospital going in New Bremen within twenty-four hours, and laid plans for a new lecture-room for one church, while to the parlors of the other she promised the piano and the pianola which were now aboard the Boston. She accepted, with very slight alterations, young Smith's plans for the manor, and engaged his friend, the landscape-gardener, to proceed with drawings for the grounds and parks, golf links, and an Italian-walled garden. She flew to the jail and roused the poor, trembling little Frenchman, therein deposited, to a state of celestial bliss by talking to him in his own language for a half hour, telling him of Paris and this and that; she bailed him out—no one else had been willing to—put him up in a good room at the hotel, clothed him, redeemed his chest of tools from Buffalo, where he had been obliged to pawn them, and gave him orders for a large number of carved mantels, cornices and other things for the manor.

"Now, Tommy!" she exclaimed at nightfall, "I am tired, too tired to think even," which was precisely the

state in which she would be. Too tired for memory or desire to conjure up either Billy's eager face or the dreamy, intense and fairer one of the Hebrew.

"Nonsense!" cried the active Tommy, "we're going to have a little dance to-night."

"But where? There's no piano here," laughing, as she glanced around the hotel parlor.

"Going to dance over in the Boston!"

"Oh, to be sure—I had forgotten the piano. Count me out. I must sleep."

"No, can't do without you. I'm going to give an imitation of Fatima. Sally says I'm perfectly splendid. I've just been practising now with a lot of her skirts and—things on!"

"Who's Fatima?" inquires Marjorie, laughing more.

"She's the dandiest thing out. New. Didn't Billy tell you? I had her for my last bachelor dinner. The fellows all went mad over her. She's a daisy! Wouldn't take wine from any man's glass there but Billy's! Only Benedict there, too! We had such a laugh! No one saw her face, she never unveils when she dances."

"Then you'll be safe in imitating her, dear brother-in-law."

"Hear that, now! Jove! Marjie, you must have her at the house some time when you get back."

"Is she——?"

"Oh, perfectly possible. Ask Billy. I got her through De Barreaux. She's one of his models—a Syrian."

"Oh, well, I'll have her for the Bi-Monthly's next meeting."

"And you will come over and applaud me to-night?"

"Oh, I suppose, as you're Sally's husband, I must. I daresay the girls and the men all think I've deserted them. Order a supper from that queer little confectioner down the street, will you, for me?"

"I will, but I doubt if any one of us can eat it!" ruefully. "I've looked in at the window."

"Tommy Eckford! you seem to forget that I am here stumping this part of the State! You'll eat whatever this part of the State provides and say nothing."

CHAPTER XXV

The Drop of Negro Blood

THE girls and the men had all gone over to the car for the dance except the hostess; she lingered a little while in the back parlor of the hotel to speak to Eva Elliott. Eltzer was off up the State for a day. The octroon glanced up from the desk which had been placed in the corner for her especial use. She would have passed anywhere for a Spaniard; she was handsome and very gentle, and quite unbustling and unpretentious. She had rare faculties, for throughout the trip and the sojourn at New Bremen she had been thoroughly unobvious; she was the occasion of no awkward moments, no wretched half hours for either her patron, her patron's guests, or the servants who waited upon her. She looked up brightly now at Marjie and rose, while Mrs. Duane sat.

"Sit down, Miss Elliott, please," exclaimed the white woman.

Eva shook her sleek, dark head. "Mrs. Duane," she answered, "if I were white I would not sit when you entered the room. Why do you ask me to because I am black?"

"You're not black!" said Marjorie indignantly.

"I wish I were!" cried the girl passionately, "I wish I were!"

"Why?" The query escapes her lips almost before she is aware of it.

"Because if I were I would not covet what I covet now. If I were black! black! black as ebony! no white man would ever look at me!" She speaks with bitterness, and her large eyes dilate and flash.

"And—" Mrs. Duane utters the word with gentleness and hesitation.

"Oh, it's nothing, nothing at all, Mrs. Duane. Only when you are kind and considerate to me and try to make it easier for me here among you; when he does—" whispering brokenly, "I could kill myself. I could kill the father and the mother of me! What am I? Neither one thing nor the other—a hybrid, a mongrel, a cur!"

"Hush—h—h!" Marjorie puts up her hand.

"No! no! I won't! I can't! Let me speak it out once, just once. I am what I say I am. Would I marry a black man? No!"

Marjorie shuddered at the idea.

"Would any decent white man, a man who is my equal in education, refinement, tastes, marry me? No! A thousand times, no! I would rather be black; I curse every drop of white blood in my veins. I curse the government that made us all free, and then turned us loose to wage the war wherein we, the blacks, can never win one decisive battle."

Marjorie listens appalled, spellbound, silent, while this young priestess of a forlorn cause spoke on.

"Oh, Mrs. Duane, God made us black; no man, no legislation, no Christian equalization scheme, can ever make us white. When they freed us, why didn't they make the provision to send us gradually either back to Africa or appropriate a reservation in the great Southwest and put us there and keep us there, where"—she falters—"where the white man could not find us; where we could have married, been born, died, and never known what it was to reach out and up to where the white man stands!"

The passionate and piteous cry touches Marjorie Duane's heart. She would have liked to be able to put her arms around this beautiful girl and soothe and comfort her. But she could not. The one drop of black blood was the impassible bar, both to her arms and to

her cheer. What could she say to the girl? Nothing. To attempt to preach to her the noble aim of elevating her own people would have been but a trivial make-shift in answer to the cry of this tortured soul.

"What is it but criminal," she goes on, "for white men to let creatures like me live here? The white man gave me his instincts, his aspirations, his ideas, hopes, tastes, grafted them all on the negro tree, and then turns me loose here in the white man's land where I can neither give nor take from the white man nor from the black. I am worse than a brute—I am nothing. I am without justifiable hope. I shrink from a negro almost as much as you do!" she cries, "and the white man shrinks from me. Our eyes meet, our lips never can. I wish that the war had wiped every member of my race off the face of this earth, I do"; she is weeping violently.

Marjie rises and with an effort lays her hand on the girl's arm and forces her into a seat. She then walks up and down the floor. Thinking, thinking, trying for a way. There is no way out of this, there is no balm nor heal for the wound of the fatal negro element. The sobs of the young reporter echo through the big, empty rooms; echo Mrs. Duane's tread; echo the fall of the red-hot, spent coals from the fire. Mrs. Duane sat down opposite to her.

"Miss Elliott, Eva," she says, in a quiet way.

The girl glanced up.

"Has any one of the men—my friends, I mean—ever said or acted toward you in any way that he should not?"

"Never," is the reply with a sob.

"Could you—could you tell me about it?" Marjie hesitates. "Sometimes when one tells a thing it loses its weight and is never quite as heavy again. Could you?" Her voice is sweet and soothing, but she is so repulsed by that one little drop of blood that she actually could have beaten herself for the manifest injustice.

Eva Elliott nodded. "It's just the old, old story, Mrs. Duane. I love the man; the man doesn't love me. How could he? God! When I think of the hundreds of thousands of women like me that have been and will be—of all they must suffer—it makes me almost crazy. And there's no help for it. Oh!" she cries, "there must be a hell. I didn't use to believe in it, but since I've grown up I do, I do! A hell, and the white man that brought the first black woman out of her country into this country must be at the very bottom of it!"

"Eva!"

"Yes! Oh, if you were in my place, and felt that scorpion of race stinging you at every pore of your flesh, pricking you at every turn you took, you would feel as I do."

"But," exclaims Marjorie, taking refuge in what she knows to be a platitude, "I thought your race were getting their own way in this country, in everything, every place."

"Mrs. Duane," cries the octoroon, "they may put a mulatto in the presidential chair, they may elect black men as Senators from every State in the Union, they may put men with negro blood in their veins in every office in the country—will that ever make the black man a white man? No. Will that scratch the slur out of my veins and make me equal to the men who sit down at your table? No. My people will die out very gradually, but they will never become your people—it is impossible." She speaks like some young prophetess, and, a little spent, she folds her hands in her lap and stops rocking in the chair.

"Eva," Marjorie says, "perhaps you are right—I don't know. I have never studied or thought much about it. But about sorrow—" she pauses a second, "I have thought a little of that."

"You! Mrs. Duane! Oh, sorrow can never touch you!" exclaims Eva Elliott.

"It touches us all," is Marjorie's answer. "Some more heavily than others, that is all. I think that the only thing that can help us—after God—is work, occupation. Don't you?"

"Maybe, after a while. Not at first."

"Would you like me to arrange some way for you to go abroad? In Europe there would be such a lot to interest a woman like you. I could easily fix it for you."

"No. I am very grateful, Mrs. Duane. But I couldn't go away from the chance of just seeing him—once in a while." The white woman regards her in silence, deference, and comprehension.

"It isn't any of the gentlemen here. It's—it's Mr. Satterlee," she whispers shamedly.

"My poor, poor child!" Marjorie's hand is laid upon the bowed head at last, and Marjorie does not shudder. She makes up her mind that, by some strategy, she will get Eva Elliott to Europe and place her in a Paris studio, for the girl has a rare talent for painting, as well as skill with her pen.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Unexpected Guest for the Dance

Miss ELLIOTT left the back room. Mrs. Duane started toward the door of the front parlor. It opened as she reached it and Isidoro de Barreaux came in. They stood for a moment and looked at each other in silence. When Marjorie had told him of her western trip and tacitly excluded him from it he had understood perfectly that his presence, for some cause, was not desired. Nevertheless, here he was. She was annoyed at the intrusion and the open defiance of her will.

"Madame!" he said with such humility and grace, such pleading in eyes and voice, as partly disarmed her, "I know I have no right here. I know that you do not want me, but I could not keep away." He speaks with an impassioned emphasis.

She sighs very softly. How delicious it might be to forget everything for a short while: politics, engineers, manor houses, prisoners, negroes, and sit down quietly and listen to De Barreaux.

"I had a concert in Buffalo. I found out how near I was to you—I could not resist. Will you punish me or pardon me? I am in your hands."

"I will pardon you," she says, a little wearily.

"I may stay for a while? Until to-morrow? You permit me to?"

"I suppose so."

"I have been in a torture since your departure."

"Yes?" she laughs.

"A frenzy. I have read the newspapers! Mon Dieu! It is not for a woman of your calibre to be in contact

with such canaille! If—if it had been my privilege to—counsel you—” he would have liked to put it very much more plainly, but as yet he hesitated, “I would have forbidden that even the hem of my lady’s garment should sweep the footprints of such people!”

She laughs again.

“Come, Mr. De Barreaux, we are having a dance in the car. Let us go over. Indeed, I am the hostess and chaperone. I had almost forgotten—although Mrs. Eckford, it is true, is there.”

He looks around instinctively for his ally—a piano. There is none.

“A little while here,” he begs.

“What for?” she asks, a bit recklessly.

“In order that I may presume to tell you what I have suffered in your absence.”

“How little you know me! I hate to be told of sufferings. There is enough in the world untold to suffice. Tell me of happiness or else be still.”

“May I?” is the importunate response. “May I tell you what life might be for you—and me—had Fate but allowed us to meet long ago?” His voice is very low, very sweet, very tender. She is tired; tired of it all. The friction and strenuousness of the past six days, so completely out of harmony with her tastes, have told upon her. The week has been without a word from her husband either by telephone, telegram, or pen. Also the customs of her set leave her practically unhampered. It is quite of a piece with what prevails for any married woman to receive the pointed attentions of any man she chooses.

There is no harm in it—there is only danger. Danger is an idol among the moderns. They like it, whether served in the gross by performers in tigers’ and lions’ cages, on loop-wheels and wire-ropes, or in the detail when a man covets his neighbor’s wife and ventures to let her know it.

Marjorie, although Gordon King's niece, had the merest shadow of a qualm in allowing De Barreaux to say what he did. Her surroundings had always assured her that men were, at least secondarily, created to adore women. In any event, she had never once in her life counted the cost to the man! To herself, she had known hitherto that the game would not even mean the loss of a candle—she was proof against it all. Just now she did, however, pause a second to consider—only a second. Billy had forgotten her very existence. Why should not she try to forget Billy?

"Tell me, then," she says, half listlessly, to De Barreaux.

The Hebrew's eyes flash. Two great passions consume him: the one for the woman he loves, the other for the vengeance that he now feels inclosed within his palm. He is epicurean to the heart's core. He will not speak in this environment. It must be told in a beautiful room, a fitting spot. He can wait. Assuredly she can.

"I dare not now," is his answer; "it should be under the stars, or close to the flowers—in a place that is warm and delicious and meet for you. My queen, let us wait." He took her hand and pressed it to his lips. Their eyes did not encounter. Marjorie felt as if she were gently going to sleep; being soothed into an exquisite revery where sensation was taking the place of thought. She withdrew her hand quickly, however, and rose.

"We must go over to the car," she said. "They will be wondering where I am. Will you come? It is a dance, you know."

"Will you dance with me?"

She inclines her head.

"Ah, I go! I go anywhere with you—Marjorie."

She halted and looked up at him and smiled.

"Do not scold me!" he urges.

They were by this time at the front door; she opened

it. It was snowing hard, the ground was already white, thickly covered.

"Let me carry you? I see the car is only across there—a few yards," says De Barreaux.

"No," she answers, "the snow is dry and hard as sand; we will run, scamper across!" and she starts.

Presently they are in the Boston, and every one is glad to see De Barreaux, and Tommy, who presides at the piano, immediately jumps into an imitation of the Polish pianist by way of Hiawatha, tossing his head about and uplifting his hands and eyes, and every one is in an excellent good-humor, Mr. De Barreaux not the least. Mr. Eckford subsides Hiawatha now into a dreamy two-step. He can really play very passably.

"You will give me this dance, Mrs. Duane?" De Barreaux asks conventionally.

Shall she? Shall she let him put his arm about her? Shall she lean upon his shoulder, her hand clasped in his? Billy? Oh, Billy was seven hundred miles away nearly, and what would Billy care if he were right here? Nothing. She stood up and in a moment more she was in the Hebrew's arms.

CHAPTER XXVII

Two "Specials" Run Out of the Grand Central Dépôt

"HOLD on, McGuire! Von't keeb you only a minute!" Mr. Schroeder rushed in at the rear door of the Alderman's saloon, having jumped out of a hansom, before it fairly stopped, as if life depended on the action.

"What's up?" inquires McGuire.

"Nopody yet, but if ve don't geep a tight eye on Mrs. Duane ve'll all soon be up a dree. I'm a-goin' to New Premen. Ve start in an hour, Ikey and me."

"You do, eh?" exclaims the other man, taking his cigar from his lips. "What the devil are ye goin' there fer?"

"Ter make it up mit Mrs. Duane. Gimme a gouple of hundreds, vill yer? Fer egspenses. Charge it up to der gampaing fund. Hurry up. I guess I von't plow in more dan dot in twenty-four hours besides der special. I'll bay for dot myself."

"Look-a-here, what are ye talkin' about?" asks the Alderman. "A couple of hundreds. Do ye take me fer a millionaire?" handing it out.

"Now see here. Dot voman has got to pe gonciliated. She is as strong as dey make 'em; she's talked apout all over der State; she's had von million brobositions from towns and willages to wisit 'em, and der whole gountry bress is paintin' der rural districts mit der Duane colors, you bet. Ikey knows. He's got it all from der inside. While he sits at his desk in der reborters' debartment he's usin' his ears mit der tickers. My zon haven't ben a telegraph oberador for nottin', you bet!"

"H—m—m," murmurs McGuire. "Well, Max, whin ye git out there, what are ye goin' ter do with her, eh?"

"Fetch her right over. I'm goin' on my knees to her. I'm goin' to blay der reform game. Tell her I've seen der error of my vays und dot I vish to pe a petter man! Ach! dere's nottin' goes mit a voman like tellin' her you vant ter pe a petter man. I'll pet you a tousand to von she'll let me in on der groun' floor if I show her dat cart."

"Go ahead!" ejaculates McGuire.

"You see, ve can't do mitout Duane now, novays. Ve got to haf him until ve get de Fifty-ninth Street pisniss clinched. After dot ve can pid him good-pye. I joost gif my vord to Henry Hull dot he should pe Governor of New York!" pompously.

"Your word ain't worth much, Maxie, me b'y!" remarks Mr. McGuire pleasantly.

"If it, vas," is the equally cheerful rejoinder, "I wouldn't pe givin' it away, would I?" He laughs.

"What's Ikey goin' for?" asks the Alderman.

"To rebort der broceedings! I tell you, when it vonce gets into der babers dot Max Schroeder vas a guest on der Poston mit Duane's vife, ve're in it sure. Dot's der ting I'm a-hurryin' fer. I'm pound to get dere to-night, if ve don't it's no go. She's a-comin' home to-morrow. I'm hirin' a special to take us. Der special is to imbress her. Ha! dere's my zon now! Good-pye, Mac!"

"Good luck to ye!" says McGuire, as Schroeder joins his son in the hansom, and they set off at a rattling pace for the Grand Central.

The father and son in a car attached to Engine No. 211 rolled out of the station exactly one hour before Engine No. 47 slid away, without a car attached. Both specials had the same destination in view, namely, New Bremen, Erie County. Neither knew of the other's start.

When Mr. Duane had looked over the morning papers, holding Laddie on his knee, he suddenly set the child

down and scrutinized one column before him more carefully. The paragraph that had arrested his attention ran this way: "Buffalo, December 17.—Isidoro De Barreaux, the famous Polish pianist, gave his long-heralded concert here last evening to an immense and enthusiastic audience. The celebrity left to-day to join Mrs. C. C. Duane's party on board the Boston, which is now lying in the yard at New Bremen, N. Y."

He sent his boy up to the nursery and left his breakfast untouched. He walked the floor for a quarter of an hour. She was his. He would go to her, for her, at once; he would fetch her home. They would not part until each had told the other what was in their hearts. He knew what was in his. Hers? He cried aloud, "God help me!" Billy was not a man of many words or of many changes of thought and purpose. Once his mind made up, however hastily, he did not pause to consider further, but went to work and did the thing. To say that he was frantic with anxiety, apprehension and a dull despair, is to put it mildly. For the very reason that he had held in for so long he was, now that he gave his fancy the rein, all the more impassioned and headlong. A thousand times he pictured to himself how he would arrive, how he would have her to himself for at least a few moments, how he would—whether she would or not—take her in his arms and tell her that she was his own, his life, his best and only beloved, the light of his eyes, the heart and soul of him! What a fool, a dotard he had been to leave her to herself! How he had encouraged the blunder of allowing her to go abroad without him by his behavior ever since she had returned.

And De Barreaux? Doubtless the joining her at this time had been an arranged plan, well thought out before she had quitted New York. Billy smiled. He bet with himself that his love would out-class the article that the Hebrew would have to offer. He believed that she would

turn to him once more if he only made her. He knew enough of women to recall that coercion is just the one thing some among them cannot and do not refuse. Then, when this mood passed, came the horrible, haunting dread that already De Barreaux had usurped his old place in his wife's heart; that the tacit estrangement between him and his wife had been so much fuel to the flame; that, easily enough, she had tired of him and his dull, prosaic, commonplace ways, and been charmed by the Pole's singularly exquisite manners and methods.

Then he remembered Fatima, and he actually shuddered. He swore in his mind to snatch Marjorie out of this alien's very arms if he should find them about her; to run off with her. She was his own wife—he would take her to the antipodes. Australia was a good country. To drop career, friends, everything here, and go there and cage her and make a new life for them both; woo her over again, love her as man never loved before! Meantime, being a most executive person, while all these and many more things were running through his brain, he telephoned to the Grand Central for them to have 47 in shape to start in twenty minutes. He picked up the valise that his man always kept packed for his emergencies, jumped into an auto and was in the yard, Robert in attendance, within the quarter hour.

"47 is nearly ready, Mr. Duane. Will you have a sleeper or a drawing-room attached?" asked the engineer, now stepping up and saluting.

"No car, Dempsey," is the answer. "You can make the run more quickly with the engine alone"; as he speaks he jumps into the caboose. "Get in. Start!" is the command.

Dempsey looked at the president of the road. He had never seen him so pale before in his life.

"Where do we go, Mr. Duane, if you please?"

Billy starts a bit. "New Bremen," he answers. "Run me in there by nine o'clock if you can."

"Very good, sir. We'll try it. I've got the best fireman in the service. That fellow you sent up last week. He was too good for overland work. I kept him here for specials."

Henry Johnson sprang on the platform and saluted the president. Billy frowned and nodded.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Duane," says the negro, "but Dempsey here kin tell you, sah, I didn't ask for de job in the East, sah. I was a-goin' West, an' they took me off."

"That's all right, my man," is the reply. "Start her," he adds to the engineer, "and go as fast as you dare."

He settled himself on the seat and folded his arms. His eyes were fixed on vacancy. He did not move for six hours. Then he took out his watch and held it in his open palm. He declined to eat and when they halted for water it was all he could do to restrain his own hand from the touch upon the throttle that would put an end to even these trifling delays.

Once he spoke. It was to the negro. "Pile it on, Johnson," he said, "if she blows up, I don't care, if we only get there quickly."

"All right, sah. Mr. Duane, we gets there quicker'n anything ever did befo', I reckon!"

"I'll run 47 into the New Bremen yard by—Ha! it's snowing!" cries Dempsey. "No matter!" he adds resolutely.

"No matter at all!" exclaims Billy. "Get there quick, and let her break up the next second."

Thence on it was a wild ride. The snow came swirling down in great sheets of blinding, dizzying white. The wind howled and shrieked and thundered. 47 shrieked and thundered back again. It was defiance for defiance, the elements against man—man against the elements. The great, yawning fire shone out with a splendid glow upon the three faces: the master's pale and

drawn, quiet but embittered and harassed by his mighty love for, and jealousy of, the woman he was rushing to snatch back to him; the engineer's grimy, set—his keen glance alert for any sign of danger, his head bent to catch the merest hint of a sound; trying to pierce the blinding fury of the storm with eyes and ears both; his brawny, big finger on the throttle, his splendid muscles taut for battle with the dangers that he knew he was running; the negro, swarth, sweating, coaling up at every mile, heaping on the fuel, raking her down, never straightening—his black back bent from start to finish to make the record run for the husband of the white lady who had befriended him.

It seemed to Billy when they had been going for nine hours that he should lose his reason; that he must pitch Johnson out of the way and leap into the snow and run for his goal; that it must be he could travel faster and reach sooner than this machine that was pulling him. Then, at the eastern end of the great bridge, Dempsey brought No. 47 to a dead stop: a long, melancholy whistle came back to them.

Duane glanced up. Dempsey answered the whistle. A few more signals were exchanged.

"Another special with a car attached is on the bridge, Mr. Duane. We've got to wait until they get off or there's danger. They're running at a snail's pace. The bridge is shaking."

"Very well," is the answer.

They only wait ten minutes, but they seem to him ten days long. The special ahead was Schroeder's. As it swayed and tottered across the suspension Isaac Schroeder said, between his bites at a chicken sandwich and his pulls at a sherry flask, "this'll make a good story! What a night!"

"Ha, my poy, it doesn't make any difference apout der night! It's der getting dere and seeing der laty and fixin' up der job," is the rejoinder.

"Trust you for that!" says the son. "And me for writing it up to the queen's taste. Oh, she'll weaken when she sees the special and the kind of a storm it is—and your repentance!"

Schroeder's special staggered off the bridge. The signal came back to Dempsey. He started 47 once more.

"Can't you overtake that fellow ahead, Dempsey?" he asks, "at Tinton junction, and cut in front of him there by one of the side tracks?"

"Impossible, Mr. Duane. He's running his girl for life and death, I should say, with this snow. I can't make mine go faster to save my soul!"

"Do your best," is the laconic reply. "Life and death." It echoes over and over in his mind. He is making the run for life and death, too, it seems to him. Is he? Then he tries to laugh. Tries to fancy that Marjorie will greet him in the dingy parlor of the old hotel—he remembers it in his trips over the road—that she will be chatting with her sister, perhaps. And De Barreaux, if he is there at all—newspapers print so many things that are not true—De Barreaux, then, will be talking to Betty Davies or Imogene Propper.

"No, he won't." Billy says it to himself as he bends his eyes once again back to the face of his watch. "If he is there he will be speaking to Marjorie."

"Mr. Duane, I'll run her in in the ten-hour limit after all!" cries Dempsey, his voice rising shrilly triumphant even above the howl of the wind and the whirr of the wheels and the engine.

"Seven hundred and eighty miles!" ejaculates the president of the road. "Pretty good!"

Once clear of the swaying bridge Schroeder's train had dashed ahead and was able to make up for lost time. Once clear of the bridge Dempsey's steady hand had laid on every ounce of steam that he dared; 47 was responding like a living creature to her driver's touch.

She panted and plunged through the abyss of darkness, through the impenetrable thickness of the wind-crazed snow; scudded into the drifts and out of them; now and then on to a short piece of clear track; back into the soft, relentless billows of the piled-up white. As the hail rattled on her windows and her headlight, struck and spattered at her smokestack; as the tempest made her reel and roll on the steels, as it yelled and tugged at her very heart and sent the flames, spurting up with the smoke, scarlet into the chasm of the night, as Billy rocked in his seat and Dempsey clung to his post and Johnson unflinchingly stood at his, 47 swung along at seventy miles an hour!

"Look, Mr. Duane!" cried the engineer.

Billy glanced up. The clouds were parting, deep and far; a gash in the inky sky as wide as a man's hand yonder, to the northwest of them; in it, riding high, serene and beautiful, shone the moon.

"Now for it! in ten more minutes, sir, I'll land you in the yard at New Bremen. I know where I am at last!" Dempsey laughed aloud. So did the negro. And so did 47—a long, piercing shriek of a laugh, that echoed over the wide plains and startled the farmers that lived miles away to the side of the great reach of the river meadows. The master alone was silent. He did not move; he was on a tension now that admitted of nothing, that drew all his resources to keep himself still and able to breathe quietly and decently through the six hundred seconds that still divided him from Her!

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Murder

THE engineer of Mr. Schroeder's special got a good fee on the route, and he brought his train into the New Bremen yard a full twenty minutes earlier than Dempsey did 47. He had had one hour's start of the other engine.

Mr. Schroeder and his son went over to the hotel and registered. They both noticed the new sign over the bar door. Mr. Schroeder winked playfully to his offspring.

"Dot's vhat I call a liddle brevious, ain't it?" he exclaimed, jerking his telltale, supple thumb toward the sign.

"It's smart, that's what it is," is the son's reply. "Nothing like making the populace intimate with an idea before you spring it on 'em. Getting 'em used to it. Custom's a great factor in everything."

The two new arrivals were informed that Mrs. Duane was having a dance over on the car just across the road in the yard. Would they have word sent or go over themselves, or wait?

They concluded to wait. They would not intrude. Their own car was lined up just over there, too, on the other side of the Boston. They were here on important business.

"Let's take a look around, Ikey, anyvay," remarked Mr. Schroeder.

"The snow has not fallen very heavily out here, it seems. It's stopped now; the moon is out. All right, Dad, let's get outside," is the son's response.

They did not talk. They understood each other very

well. They were out there to observe. One was a New York politician, the other a New York newspaper man of a certain class. They crossed by common but unspoken consent to the yard and close to the Boston, whence came sounds of revelry and mirth. They craned their necks to see in. They could not. Every curtain on the Boston was pulled down with the exception of the two opposite to each other at the rear end of the car.

Isaac Schroeder pointed to a pile of railroad ties that lay farther along just beside one of these windows, next to the rear platform of the Boston, and forward of the Amaryllis. Both men stepped ahead and mounted the pile.

They looked in and saw Mr. Eckford at the piano, the rest dancing, except Mrs. Duane and Mr. De Barreaux. He spoke to her. She glanced at him. In a second his arms were about her and they were waltzing together.

Just then Dempsey brought 47 rolling into the New Bremen yard and into position on the track on the other side of the one where the Boston was stationed. The caboose was alongside of the platforms of the two cars of Mrs. Duane's train, and directly in front of the eyes of the two Schroeders.

Billy tossed a hundred-dollar bill to his engineer and a fifty to Johnson. He was making the spring from the engine to the ground when he beheld, through the window of the car, his wife in the arms of the Hebrew. He stopped short.

Dempsey and Johnson had jumped off on the other side and gone for a bite.

The president of the road sank down on the steps of 47, paralyzed. He remembered vaguely, as if in some sort of a dream, what he had said to himself when he started "That he would snatch Marjorie out of this alien's very arms, if he should find them about her." Well, he had found them "about her"—he could sit there and stare at that fact if he wished to.

Max Schroeder stood on tiptoe—he was a little man—staring over at Billy. There was a crisis here which, quick-witted as he was, he did not grasp at once. He nudged his son.

“There’s Duane himself!” he whispers.

“Shut up!” the younger man whispers back, as Dolly suddenly pulls the curtain of the window down in front of them. Then taking his father by the sleeve, the son guiding the father with his finger on his lips, they get down from the pile of ties and crawl alongside the Amaryllis to the centre of the car; there they crawl under the car, emerge on the other side, and, still creeping, bring themselves up on the far side of 47.

Isaac Schroeder with a tread as soft as that of a fox lifts himself up on the top step of the engine; his father stops on the lower one. They are at Duane’s back; they can watch him—they can see all that he can see inside the Boston.

“Vhat’s der row?” asks the father.

Isaac Schroeder takes out his pencil and shakes it in his parent’s face.

“Here’s a story, by heavens!” he nods over toward Marjorie and De Barreaux, then down toward Billy Duane.

“You don’t mean it! Yes! Yes! Ach!” Max Schroeder clasps his hands together in glee. “We’ve got him now.”

“Hush-h!” whispers the son, “he might hear you.”

“Not he! He’s mat mit jealousy! Ikey, my poy, lay it on tick. Gif em heatlines as pig as der width ob der baber. Pe cautious. Don’t make yourself or your baber liable for anythin’. Weit it all mit—” The two men were so full of the greedy delight of their supposed find, so assured of the self-absorption of their intended victim, that they failed to note that just here Duane’s muscles relaxed, his hands lost grip of each other, his lips came together once more, his head turned cautiously, a

trifle in their direction. "—Mit," proceeds Max Schroeder, "discretion! Is dere an imbending scandal in der high life of der four hunterd? Is der peautiful vife of der prilliant and glever president of a great raidroad—who is also a great city official—losing her heart mit a celeprated musician of foreign pirth? Vill dere pe another divorce atted to der already long list? unt—Ikey, my poy, ve'll show him dot set up! Set up, mint you, und den ve'll see if der Fifty-ninth Street Pill vill pe wetoed or not!"

Duane's head turned half an inch further around, his right hand doubled up, his right foot drew slowly up.

"I'll gif you der headline, my son," continues Max, while his own and Isaac's and Billy Duane's eyes are all fixed upon those two graceful, handsome figures floating around the Boston, to the strains of Hiawatha, in each other's arms.

For her head is almost resting on his shoulder. His eyes are looking deep into hers; his lips are murmuring, "my lady! My love!"

"Make it dis vay," Max whispers on: "'Does she alreaty lofe anodder und forget her huspant? Unt vill she——'"

What Mr. Schroeder might further have said is cut short by a backward blow in the face that sends him reeling off the platform.

"Hound!" says Billy Duane under his breath, as he leaps across and down to the Democratic Chairman; "I've heard all, and before I leave you I'll cram every word you've uttered down your damned throat!"

Isaac Schroeder drew his pistol and aimed it behind Billy's back, straight at Billy's heart—short range, no shrift and no knowledge of the attack. Isaac Schroeder said to himself, "Now is my chance to keep my oath!"

Click!—Cl-i-ick!

Henry Johnson, attracted by the scuffle, had rushed over from the hotel with a sandwich in his hand. There

was no time for anything but just what the negro did. He threw his big, black body fearlessly between Duane and death. With a groan, the huge bulk staggered over on the snow in the moonlight, and the place was red with blood. There was a pause between them all. Billy knelt beside the shot man.

"Call help!" he cries to the other, as he raises Johnson's head on his knee.

"'Tain't no use, sah, I'se a goner, I is. It's no matter, sah, I'se—willin'—I is. Der Madam, she trus'ed me, sah; better a niggah—what's been—in prison, git shot dan—her—husband——!" Johnson rolled over dead.

Isaac Schroeder had fled the instant his pistol had done its work. Dempsey by this time had Max Schroeder pinioned under his two hundred pounds of firm flesh and blood.

The shot had put Marjorie out of Isidoro De Barreaux's arms; the dance on the Boston was at an end.

Billy said to Seaborough and Tommy, "Keep the women from here; take them away—all of them."

When Marjorie beheld him safe she was willing to go. Tommy told her it was her husband's express wish. She would have gone to him. She had been glad of the pistol shot. In that moment of temptation, when De Barreaux was so near to her and beginning to be so dear, she had sprung from him gladly at its strange, weird call. She saw her husband bending in the snow over the dead negro. She thought she understood it as a wonderful care and tenderness for her when he had said for her not to come to him out there; he would be with her presently at the hotel—that must be it. Then he would explain the whole horrible affair to her. How strange it was, this accident! How did it happen that her husband and Schroeder and a negro should be in juxtaposition? for Marjorie did not know that there had been a murder. She had not seen the victim's face clearly in the dim light as she had leaned from the ves-

tibule of the Boston, held back from rushing straight to Billy by Seaborough and Tommy. She did not know that the shot had been intended for her husband. Therefore, she crossed quietly over to the hotel. De Barreaux was at her side assisting her over the snow; she paid no heed to him. She was waiting heart and soul for Billy.

The group of men and frightened girls came trooping after her—all sobered and a-hush for the sake of him who lay stark dead in the New Bremen yard, with the officers of the place bending above him. Marjorie bade her guests good-night and went up to her room. Very shortly the house was perfectly quiet. Across the way a guard was placed over Johnson's body to await the action of the coroner's jury in the morning.

Max Schroeder, released from Dempsey's powerful hold, was instantly arrested by the constable of the town. Billy Duane offered to go bail for him in the morning. Schroeder was sullen, said nothing, but a gleam of cunning triumph flashed in his eyes as Billy spoke.

He mistook his man. The Mayor-elect walked the Chairman of the Democratic Club over to the hotel with him, and asked the two officers to wait for their prisoner in the hall of the house.

"I'll be responsible for him," Duane says. "You can look him over first and see that he carries no concealed weapons, as his son did."

"Was the feller that fired the pistol this one's son, Mr. Duane?" they cried in surprise, for up to this moment Duane had scarcely opened his lips; certainly Schroeder had not; he was too clever to utter a syllable: he was waiting to see what line the prosecution would adopt. He was amazed at Billy's speech.

"Yes," was the reply of the president of the road. "He is his son. Now, Mr. Schroeder," he added, addressing the prisoner, "if you will be good enough to come in here with me for a few moments I think it will

be the best thing you can do." Duane indicated the parlor; the two rural officers were not sure whether they ought to permit this or not, but in the face of doubt they yielded silently to the power and influence of the quiet man who wished it. They sat down at the door in the hall and smoked the cigars Billy gave them. Duane and Schroeder entered the parlor, and the former closed the door.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Interview

"MR. SCHROEDER, can you guess why I've asked you in here—what I want to say to you?" Billy inquires, indicating a chair.

Schroeder shrugged his shoulders. He even smiled. He was going to hold on to what he considered his trump card through thick and thin. He fully believed that by sticking to it he could save his son, not only from the "chair," but from even the formality of a trial. So inveterate and incorporate was his own venality that he had no estimate of life or the conduct of affairs outside of or beyond the one of expediency, and expediency at any price. He had heard them wiring to every station on the road, up and down, to detain the criminal; he knew that his son would be captured easily before morning, unless he had taken to the open country a-foot, and then it might be a little longer. He was sure it was only a matter of a very few hours, anyway, but he had not the slightest fear of the issue; he hardly thought the young man would pass a month in jail. His smile broadened a little, therefore, as he said:

"It's about your wife, I subbose?"

Billy Duane did not answer. His rage and loathing of the man in front of him were such that he could not at first trust himself to speak.

"Vell," continues the Democratic Chairman, settling himself a trifle more easily in his seat and being now assured that his companion wanted him to do the talking, "vell, Mr. Duane, I tink ve can make der teal!"

Duane looked at him steadily.

"I tink I know vhat you're after." Max Schroeder winks, playfully, quite undaunted by the gaze of the man to whom he speaks. "If you'll get Ikey off of dis piness, I'll bromise, s'help me Gott! dot not von vord apout Mrs. Duane und—anyone—shall ever get into any news-baber in der United Stades."

There is a pause. Schroeder looked steadily into Duane's eyes; Duane looked as steadily into Schroeder's. The only difference was that the Alsatian's glance betrayed eagerness and anxiety, while the American's was absolutely nil. Schroeder lowered his voice still more, and leaned over still farther toward the other man.

"Is it a go?" he asks thickly.

"No, it is not," is the cold and measured reply. So cold and so measured because his heart and brain were on fire.

"Vhat?" cries Schroeder, under his breath. "Vhat do you mean, den, eh? Vhat haf you got me in here for—tell me dot?"

"I've got you in here to tell you just this. I supposed you'd have the effrontery to think that, for the sake of the lies I overheard you and your son planning to foist upon the public, you might fancy I would shield him."

"Dey ain't lies!" hisses the Democratic Chairman, "unt you know it!"

"Look here," said Billy, the blood rushing to his face. "If you repeat that, or anything like it, I'll carry you outside and cowhide you and take my chances. You know I mean what I say, always."

"Vell, go on," growls the other. "Say vhat you got to say."

"Your son is a murderer."

"'Tvas self-brotection!" screamed the father.

"Save your defence for the trial," is the laconic response.

"Dere vont be no drial!"



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"That's what you supposed, Mr. Schroeder." Duane fixes his eyes on the other's face. "But there will!" he speaks with the most intense emphasis. "I will leave no stone unturned to secure the criminal, to have him indicted, tried and convicted of the crime he has committed."

"You vont! you vont! you vont!" cries the other. "I got you, I haf! Your vife's in lof mit anodder man. Anybody can see it mit der half of an eye, unt——"

Billy sprang to his feet. He seized the Democratic Chairman by the collar and shook him, as a Newfoundland might shake a rat, until Schroeder was purple. Then he let go of him.

"Now," said he, "one thing more. If ever a line, a word as to Mrs. Duane is printed, you'll answer for it. You know how?"

"I ton't! I ton't! What d'you mean?"

Billy Duane got close up to Max Schroeder and said:

"I'll kill you at sight and hang for it. There's no other way left on God's earth for a decent man to deal with the foulest and cheapest and most venal press in the world's history. I mean just what I say—you're a dead man if the lie is printed."

"But my son?" Schroeder begins to whimper. "If I bromise you to keeb still?"

"Your promise is worth nothing, sir; besides, I am not buying anything in that line. Look here, Max Schroeder," he exclaims hotly, "if there is a drop of untainted, uncontaminated, straight blood in your veins you've got to learn to-night, if you never did before, that there are pure women; and that there are men you can't buy, no matter if you strike at that which is dearest to them."

Duane's tone, his splendid, outspoken soul ringing clear and firm in his appeal to the politician would have found the honest spot in any but the most cringing creature that crawls. Schroeder didn't understand one of

its vibrations: he only knew that he had failed, missed the bull's eye, and must trim his sails somehow to protect his son. He believed that Duane would kill him if his wife was brought into question; that trump card had been ruthlessly snatched from his hand—he must play out whatever was left. There was a pause. Duane was just about to show his guest out when Schroeder burst forth:

"I bromise you, on my vort—on der vort of der barty—you shall be der next Governor of der State of New York if you let Ikey off!"

Duane's lips curled. Did the man who said this know—had he ever, even in a remote past, heard that there were such things as honor and truth? No. And Max Schroeder was a very fair sample of the men who rule the greatest city on the western half of the globe.

"Schroeder," said Billy, "I'm not buying office. I won't let your son off. He has committed murder—cold-blooded murder at that."

"Only a nigger," sneers the Chairman.

"A nigger that gave his own life, without a thought, for a man whom he never saw but once before in his life; and a nigger's life, Mr. Schroeder, is worth more than the white man's who takes it from him. Now—" he moves toward the door.

"My son! My son!" whispers the Democratic Chairman. "He did it to save his boor old fadder! My Ikey!"

"You're not old," says Billy coldly. "You're only about forty-five. He didn't do it to save you from anything worse than a beating that you both deserved. He did it because——"

"Vell, vhy den?"

"Shall I tell you," asks the Mayor-elect.

Schroeder nods through his tears.

"Because you've brought him up to dishonor you: to lie, to cheat, to slander, to get the better of anyone he

could. You've set him the example. You've praised him when he did a smart trick or told a successful falsehood or wrote a bitter scandal out of whole cloth for his paper, or came out ahead with marked cards, or sold his friends. Because you've brought him up, as thousands of men like you are bringing up their children in the streets of New York, to hang around the doors of the rum-holes and the sinks of iniquity on the east side and on the west. Because you're bringing them up without religion or virtue or truth—to fear neither God nor man. And I tell you, Mr. Schroeder, every mother's son of them has got to fear God once before he dies; has got to meet a man he fears, too, before his end comes. You and your son have met me. I fear nothing, not even a liar, a coward, or a murderer!"

"You vont led my poy go to der chair, Mr. Duane? You vont! You vont!" He kneels and grasps Billy's knees. "You can keeb him from dot at least. It's a fadder beggin' on his knees for his only son," his tears flow fast. Billy Duane was always soft of heart.

"When the time comes," is his answer, "write to Mrs. Duane!"

Then the two policemen take Mr. Max Schroeder off and put him in the cell in the small prison whose most recent occupant had been the suicidal French wood-carver.

Billy called Dunster and was shown by the hotel proprietor up to the room alongside of Mrs. Duane's. Johnson had already fetched his portmanteau over. He threw off his coat and waistcoat, his collar and scarf, rolled his sleeves to his shoulders and fairly scrubbed his arms and hands and face and head with soap and water. He was a big, superb looking fellow at any time, but fresh from the towels he was handsomer than ever. He brushed his hair apart and without waiting for any further toilet stepped out and knocked gently at his wife's door.

CHAPTER XXX

Husband and Wife

SHE had fallen into an uneasy, restless sleep; she started up wide-eyed now and said: "Come in."

"Did I waken you?" he asks, hesitating.

"Why, yes, I suppose so—yes."

The gas was turned very low, but he saw her rub her eyes in the old, childish fashion he knew so well with the backs of her hands; saw the long, soft, curling hair about her shoulders, lying in masses on the pillow.

"I'm sorry," he goes on.

"I'm not; not at all." She reaches for a shawl and throws it around her. "It's cold," she says.

How he would have liked to put his arms about her and make her warm.

"Now tell me all about it?" Marjie continues in a comfortable, commonplace tone. "Why did you come? What was the whole dreadful affair about? and how in the world were you dragged into Mr. Schroeder's quarrel with some horrible negro or other?"

Billy's right hand steadied him as it grasped the top of the high, old-fashioned foot-board of the bedstead.

"You see," he answers, "I took it into my head to run on here and see how you were all getting along."

"Yes—?" How it struck at her, that "all"!

"I took a special. Reached. Got into a dispute with Schroeder, whom I found prowling about. I gave him a trouncing. His son shot me from the back to kill——"

"Billy! You! It was your quarrel?"

"The negro threw himself between us and came to his death!"

"Oh, Billy!"

Her arms are almost flinging the shawl away and going out to him, but she remembers that "all" and is motionless.

"I owe you my life, dear," he says, while his left hand grips the wood as well as the right as he stands there staring at the woman of his heart. When Billy Duane said "dear," it was a thousand times sweeter than any word ever uttered by any other man—at least so his wife had always thought. She thought so still, but she simply said:

"How to me?"

"It was Johnson, your Thirty-eighth Street man, whom young Schroeder killed just now." And then he told her what the dying black's last words had been.

"Oh!" she cried, "oh!"

"Perhaps he's spared a lot of future trouble by it," Duane says, his eyes fastened on that figure sitting up there before him.

"I wasn't thinking of him," she murmurs.

"Of whom, then?"

"You," she whispers.

He leans far over the foot-board toward her. "What of me?" he questions tensely. He will have all or he will have nothing. He was just that kind of a man.

She doesn't understand. She is too proud by far to make terms, even by the tenderness of a single tone of her voice.

"Well, naturally," resuming an ordinary manner, "if you had been killed, it would have been—" Yes, she will be harsh, it is best; he doesn't care for her a particle, and why should she betray herself? She will not—"rather awkward," she finishes, drawing the knit woollen thing closer about her.

"Perhaps it would have made things simpler, dear,"

he speaks the word again, but its cadence of exquisite, agonized entreaty is wholly unrecognized by Marjorie. She thinks he is trying to be kind and nice and tender and dutiful, and she wishes he would go away and leave her to sleep if she can; and the world is topsy-turvy and, after all, the only restful person in it is Isidoro De Barreaux.

Billy puts out his hand on the coverlet and strokes down her little hand just once. He smothered a sigh, and drew back.

"I'm glad," he says, "that so long as my life was saved I owe it to you. I just wanted to say that to you. I'll—go now."

"You will stop over and return to town in the Boston with us all?" she inquires, "won't you?" For there is something in his manner which makes her think he is off again in short order.

"Oh, impossible, no!" he replies at the door. "I've got to get back to-morrow, or rather," glancing at the clock on the mantel as it strikes four, "today. You are returning—when?"

"Saturday or Sunday."

"Go to sleep now, and good-bye. I shall start before you are up."

He went away.

CHAPTER XXXI

The Day Before They Left New Bremen

ELTZER went to New York with Mr. Duane. Schroeder was taken to Buffalo.

Johnson's funeral was set for Saturday. Everyone went, but the chief mourner, in the first carriage with the Episcopal priest, was Eva Elliott. She had wished it so.

"The man has no relations here or anywhere, so far as can be discovered by telegraphing to his old haunts in New York. He is a negro, I am a negress. I will do what I ought to do for my fellow-African."

She said it heroically and quietly, and she had her way.

The countryside turned out as well as the towns and villages, and the most beautiful flowers were sent by high and low to lay upon the mortal remains of him who had given his own life for that of another. When they came back from the cemetery they found the word awaiting them that Isaac Schroeder had been captured in a swamp, near the canal, and was now en route to Buffalo.

Eva Elliott sat down at her desk, mechanically, after she had given Mrs. Duane the message; for a ticker had been installed in the back parlor of the hotel. It was only two o'clock in the afternoon.

Marjorie was wondering which thing she had better do first of all those to be done before she left New Bremen. She raised her eyes to fix them upon the octoroon.

There was someone as unhappy— No! no! a hundred times no! No one could be as unhappy, as un-

worthy as she herself! This girl over there loved Dan Satterlee. Whom did she, Marjorie, love?

One day, nay, one hour, her heart turned to her husband with a frenzied burst of tremulous devotion, admiration, worship; the next, she felt her very soul slipping into the entrancing leash of the Hebrew's subtle spell. A woman who did not know her own mind!

"Ah," she petulantly reflected, "I am one of those women whose minds must be known for them by the man!"

A woman who could dally and vacillate between this and that!

"Yes," she thought, in self-excuse. "It is because there are two of me, at least. I am a modern of the moderns—complex, unstable, horrible; one man gives me one set of things; the other man gives me another set. I want both sets. I don't want both men? God forbid! There is one of the two that I love; I know it deep down in my own soul—but he must discover it. Until he does? well, vive la bagatelle!" Thus she concluded matters with the superficial side of herself.

The real fact was she turned feverishly, impatiently to bettering the condition of others; which is, in nineteen cases out of twenty, a good woman's only resource in cases of unhappiness. Perhaps there would not be so much good done in the world were the women all happy: therefore it is possibly cause for thankfulness that the majority are not in a state of bliss.

She wondered what she could do for Eva Elliott; what, that is, that would be of service to her and help her to battle along most easily with her strange and miserable burden.

Marjorie had established a hospital in New Bremen. The ministers and physicians and lawyers and other magnates of the little town, whom she had called in to consult with her and Tommy Eckford and Woodward Clarke about it, had solemnly avowed that months would

be required in which to deliberate, investigate, and appropriate, before the actual building, equipment and installation were to be thought of.

Mrs. Duane listened attentively to what they had to say; paid tribute of silence to all their wise laws and profound looks; gave them a handsome luncheon and sent them home very much pleased with themselves at least, which is the main duty, all said and done, of any and every hostess on all occasions. Then, the afternoon succeeding, she had visited the real estate man and found out about a large, roomy, double house on the outskirts of the town, with a garden and porches, a good well and a barn.

She drove out and saw it. Rented it on the spot; engaged painters to go and paint it completely, both inside and out; resisted all the wheedlings of the wall-paper man. Paint it should be; paint could be washed, paper could not. It was painted then in two days. While the last coats were drying the scrub women were sent in, and in twelve hours it was clean from cellar to garret.

Meantime she had been to the furniture store and bought out the most of its contents, which were promptly moved in, together with carpets, rugs and a suitable kitchen and laundry equipment. Telephone and telegraph connections were ordered, the place endowed and recorded, curtains and shades put up, pictures promised, the doctors notified and the authorities advised that in a very few days the "C. C. Duane Hospital of New Bremen" would be open for patients!

They gasped.

"But why?" Marjorie said. "I never could understand why, when anything was to be done and one had the necessary money, one did not do it."

She then instituted a search for a matron and one trained nurse as a beginning. None had as yet been found exactly fitted to the more important post. Mar-

jorie now bethought her of the hospital as she sat looking at Miss Elliott's nerveless, impassible face.

"Miss Eva," she said suddenly, speaking from her seat in the front room into the back one.

"Yes, Mrs. Duane?" The octoroon rose at once and approached her employer, for, in addition to her reportorial duties, Mrs. Duane had gotten her to attend to all the routine of her curious New Bremen and Erie County correspondence.

"I think you would make an admirable matron, even if you are so young, for my hospital here. Would you like the position?"

"No," the girl answers. "No, Mrs. Duane. There would be too much time to—think—there. I thank you all the same, very, very much for having such confidence in me. Besides," she adds, "you forget, the people would not listen to me in such a capacity."

"Yes, I see!" is Marjorie's answer, "I did forget."

Eva returned to her desk.

"Seventeen more letters by this morning's mail, Mrs. Duane, asking you to come and 'quiet' as many more towns. These are from all over the State!" exclaims the octoroon, holding up the pile. Marjorie laughed. She was immensely pleased with what the press called her "Anti-Noise Crusade." Glad she had started it, and very decided that it must continue. But how? She, Marjorie Duane, could never tour the country on this or any public errand. She was a person who disliked publicity; whose methods were secretive and retiring if they were punctual and unhesitating.

An idea occurred to her. She then and there proposed to Eva Elliott that she should visit these towns and represent her, and inaugurate the desired battles against racket. The demand for this warfare was honest, earnest, sincere; it came, soberly, from matter-of-fact and prosaic men of affairs; enthusiastically, from scientific men and thinkers; with unconscious humor, from weary mothers

and fathers of girls who had teased their parents into buying them pianos; from irked and nerve-tortured teachers and artisans who were obliged to live within five minutes of factories, schools, railway-yards, churches and other noise-distributing centres; from mechanics and operatives begging for release from brain and ear-splitting bells and whistles, for which there was no real use. The appeals were beginning to arrive not only from the State of New York, but from New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut as well.

Eva listened and thought for a moment in deferential silence. Then she said that she would like to undertake it—that the constant going about from place to place was just what she required.

Marjorie told her she would place everything necessary at her disposal, and that as soon as she could be released from the position she had on the newspaper, she could count upon starting, with the proper equipment.

It was, by this time, Saturday afternoon.

To say that Johnson's tragic death had cast a shadow over the whole party is to express the state of the case very inadequately. And when it came to be known that the negro had met his end in saving Mr. Duane's life the excitement was increased tenfold.

The piano and the æolian from the Boston were sent over to the church parlor to which Marjorie had promised them, and when she conferred the gift she remarked that the only benefit and good use for a piano for the general public was as an attachment to the æolian; for under these circumstances false notes could not be struck. practising could not be done and people could not be tormented to any greater degree than as a certain set of sounds might more or less accomplish that end.

It was a dreary afternoon. The snow lay thin and sparse upon the wide lands; back of the main street the tufts of brown and blackened weeds and grass were low swept and huddled by the wind; the sun was set-

ting behind the far-off purpling hills in cold and pallid grandeur without a cloud, just the clear, luminous, unsympathetic yellow and the quick-succeeding grey. The call of the laughing crows from the woods, the little river bound and silent, an icy streak across the great stretch of the meadows.

Marjorie had taken a walk alone, back into the country; a walk over her "prairie" that Billy had given to her. She had selected the elevation where the Manor House was to be built a day or two before, and now she went out by herself to look at it again.

What was she building it for? Would she and Billy ever live in it? They had drifted so far away from each other now that it seemed foolish almost to be planning another home.

Laddie? It would be years and years before Laddie would want a house of his own, and when he did he could choose and make it himself.

It would give employment to hundreds of men. Ah! yes, to be sure, that was the object of it! New Bremen was already, in one week, a different place on account of the Manor House; the people, the mills, the quarries, the copper-mine, the sand-pit, and all the trades that had languished and starved were waking up, and the pulses of things and people were stirring and blessing her. And, by-and-by, when Billy came to be running for Governor—they would know how much they were indebted to him, and they would want him in the office; and further on, perhaps, there would come a call for him to the greatest office of all. That was what Marjorie dreamed of.

She stood at the top of the hill and took in good draughts of the keen, fine air: it was very cold, but so sweet and sharp with the scents that the beneficent earth is never lacking in, even in the hardest frost, that she felt invigorated, elevated, happy almost.

She turned to go back to the town.

De Barreaux was at her side. He had some roses in his hand that he had been getting for her from the village florist. The fragrance of the hot-house flowers jarred upon her. She would not even look at them.

"Why did you come?" she asks petulantly.

"Because I could not help it."

"Please go away."

"You wish it?"

"Yes."

He threw the roses down, scattering them in her path, so that she had to walk over them and crush them. He left her and walked on up the hill.

She came down, treading on his flowers, and not failing to remark the intimate appreciation of her mood and the fine and subtle appeal of his humility. When she reached the main street there stood the Episcopal church across the road; the door was open a little way.

She remembered how her Aunt Sophy, the Bishop's wife, always said she could not bear to pass an open church door without going in, if only for a moment; that she believed it brought a blessing. Marjorie felt that she would like to be blessed and purified and sanctified. She crossed the road and went in.

It was nearly dark outside and therefore much more sombre within. She went up to the altar-rail and knelt down. There was no one to be seen. They had been sweeping for Sunday and had left the door open to air the place.

Her prayer was voiceless. Sometimes the best prayers are, voiceless and wordless too; mere aspirations of thankfulness or supplication born of a joy or a grief too poignant for exact phrasing. Her mind was full of her husband and of the exceeding gentleness of his language when he told her that he "owed his life to her."

Billy could give her lands and tribute and acknowledgement and rare courtesies and the chivalrous homage of a king—but——

And then came to her the awful memory of his peril. What if, instead of poor Johnson, her Billy had been killed? She shuddered.

"Her Billy?"

Why! he was not hers. Was she his? No, they were married to each other, to be sure, but like hundreds of other people in the similar predicament, Billy did not care for her any more, and she—? Marjorie said to herself, "I am incapable of caring for anyone."

Then she recalled, with shame, that she ought not to be thinking these things in a church. She pulled herself together; she thanked God that Billy was alive.

Then she heard a sound of sobbing, very soft, very smothered; she glanced around. The sexton came in from the vestry-room with a little oil lamp in his hand, prepared to lock up for the night.

From yonder, under a stained glass window representing the Virgin, a figure arose from its knees. It was Eva Elliott. Marjorie held back, and restrained the old sexton, too, while the octroon went out. Then bidding him good-night Mrs. Duane went slowly back to the hotel.

CHAPTER XXXII

A Spin in the Blue Fox

DUANE went back to New York on December 20th in the caboose of Number 47, travelling nearly as fast as he had the day before on the outward trip. He had eaten nothing from the moment he had set down his coffee-cup at breakfast on the nineteenth, on reading the paragraph as to De Barreaux, until the next afternoon at four, when he swallowed a glass of brandy and a biscuit at the Metropolitan Club.

From that on he gave himself no time to think; he did not stop to consider whither he was tending or to ask where it would all lead. He shut down on a part of himself, as it is possible for some men to do. They can, up to a certain point, hold themselves as perfectly in hand as they can their own horses. Billy was such a man.

He had the instinctive knowledge, back somewhere in his brain, that the day of reckoning must come; that he could not live this sort of a life always; that perhaps the most horrible of all calamities was hastening his way, and according to his code, a divorce was the most horrible. He felt that if Marjorie did prefer De Barreaux to him, well—what could be done? What was possession worth without the divine will and wish of the possessed? Nothing! Nothing! Nothing! He said that over to himself a great many times a day—"Nothing!" He had himself in hand as yet. He had besides a thousand matters connected with his approaching taking up of the cares of his office.

There was more than enough of men and affairs to

keep him busy from early morning until late at night. He toiled and worked like a slave: he omitted no detail, refused to see no one, left his secretaries in idleness; kept in touch with all his clubs, an eye on his stables, his racing machines, the yacht he was putting in commission—in case his wife wanted to go on a midwinter tour in Southern waters—on the Long Island farm and the mills up the river.

He was perpetually on the go, and his man averred that “if Mr. Duane kept it up at this gait, he’d need a second valet and a third, too, as he’d kill any one gentleman in that capacity.”

Through all the rush and stress and, pressure, the doing, undoing, planning, directing and ordering ran one single thought, like the thread on which the rosary is strung—that thought was Marjorie.

And Marjorie in her turn kept on as vivid, and tireless a pace as her husband. Dinners, suppers, theatres, luncheons, dances, drives, matinées, anything, everything, so that not an hour of the waking eighteen should be without its sixty minutes full of something exacting, active, impetuous, and seemingly important.

She planned one novelty in which her Aunt Sophy took an especial interest. This was to revive on January first, the day when Billy should become Mayor, the old-time fashion of receiving “New Year’s calls.”

The girls whom she invited to receive with her and the men of her set were all enchanted; given a distinctly novel function, no matter how old its origin, and the woman with the courage and aplomb to launch it, success, approbation and imitation are sure to follow.

New Year’s morning, when Marjorie looked out of her windows, she saw a strange machine in front of the door, very handsome, dark blue (her own color), with blue fox robes and on runners; the jingle of the rows of bells at each side of the seats had attracted her atten-

tion; and now an envelope was brought to her with a card scribbled in Billy's big, bold hand.

"Happy New Year. Look out the window, please, and see the first auto-sleigh ever built. I hope you'll accept it, and will you take a spin with me this morning in it?"

"BILLY."

It was a magnificent day; the snow thick and firm, the sun shining brilliantly. Of course she would go. She got ready, and had the little lad put into his seal coat and cap; then she took him by the hand and came down the broad staircase into the big hall, where Billy stood with his back to the blazing fire waiting for her.

"Oh, Billy!" she cried, "it's a beauty! Thank you so much! How good of you to get it for me. Where did you find it?"

"Had it built in France; an idea of my own. Glad you like it," he answers, taking her two hands in his; and then, pointing to the scarfpin she had sent to him shining in his teck, he added, "thank you for this—for remembering me. Where's the boy going?" he adds, picking the child up and sitting him on his shoulder. "Eh, Laddie?"

"With us," she replies.

"No!" exclaims her husband, "I'll take him for a turn after we get back."

She blushed. Did he then care still, as he always used to, that they two should go alone anywhere? But no! it was only his desire and striving to appear consistent and unchanged. That was it, certainly. The color rushed away from her face. They got into the Blue Fox, Billy dismissed the chauffeur, and away they went up to the Park in the first auto-sleigh New York had ever seen.

He had planned to say a thousand things to her, not one of which he said. Their chat was persistent, con-

tinuous and all about nothing that either one was thinking of. They met many people whom they knew, and the gay salute of the day was exchanged with laughter as they whizzed by each other.

They met De Barreaux; he was a famous hand with a machine and he was going at great speed in the merriest little runabout, scurrying over the snow like a bird, his small chauffeur idle. His cap came off entirely, his beauty-loving eyes took in with greed and joy the loveliness of Marjorie. The sight of her beside her husband only served to whet his feelings and his purpose; which latter was, of course, to endeavor to so shape matters as that Mrs. Duane should seek a divorce, obtain it, and become Mrs. De Barreaux.

The sight of the Hebrew drew the blood up into Billy Duane's face and throat, made him turn the auto about sharply—so sharply that Marjorie, not in the least a timid or easily upset person—actually clung a little to his arm; made him put on more speed, and draw his breath hard; made him think of the awful words Max Schroeder had said eleven days ago at New Bremen:

“Your wife is in love with another man!”

If this fellow could say it, others must have thought it. He had a mind to dash the machine, Marjorie, himself, down yonder into the river. One little pressure, and just a let-her-go and it would all be over with forever. He glanced down at his wife's face, so sweet, so fair, so dear, so bewitching, with its dimples and little dark brown curls and deep fringed eyes, and the mouth that he would have travelled to the infernal regions with pleasure, in order to touch with his own.

No man loves to his full capacity until he has reached the age of forty; this will be ardently disputed by every man under forty, but when the disputants attain those years they, too, will know that it is true. In the premises of the assertion, it must be remembered that one is talking of the men who can love at all. These are

few and far between, just as women, similarly endowed, are few and far between also. As with the other human capacities, so with love: maturity brings perfection; the bud is not the rose, the blossom is not the fruit. A man's excursions into love, while he is as yet in his attaining years, are not what his passion for a woman is when he has attained—not her—but the forty years!

A girl under twenty has not the possibilities in her grasp which are the prerogatives of the woman of thirty. To the man of forty, looking back at his love-life, it all seems misty, inadequate, poor, narrow, measurable, therefore dissatisfying, in comparison with that which he has to offer now in the plenitude of his powers. In the past it was an impulse, an attraction, a strange new thing, apart and alone. Now it seems a far stranger, newer thing—irresistible, magnetic—to which all the impetus, all the factors, foundations, and outcomes of his being are but tributary. Then it was to live and love. Now it is to live for love, because of love, in order to love—to bend every fibre, pulse, thought, and plan to the winning! Yes, when a man is forty and discovers himself in love, he has the greatest thing in the world in reach.

Billy Duane was forty, and in love with Marjorie for the second time. By the light of that which he felt for her today all that had gone before looked small enough. He would woo her over again. What a happiness it would be to humor her whims, pet her fancies, watch out for her moods, be at beck and call of all her wants. Pshaw, he would pit himself against De Barreaux or anyone else! He would win her back to him. What was all this turmoil he had been having with himself after all? The year's absence had been a mistake—he could rectify it. Schroeder's utterance was merely the blackguard impulse of any ruffian who might chance to see a married woman dancing with a man not her husband.

Billy put the speed on harder just here; he recalled the look on Marjie's face and on the Pole's when he had seen them that night. He recalled how it had paralyzed all his purpose and the bravery of his big threat to go and "snatch her out of the Hebrew's very arms if he should ever find her in them."

Well, no matter, Marjorie was a bit of a coquette; no one knew that better than Billy. She was very fond of admiration—well, why not? He was glad for men to admire her, how could they help it? De Barreaux showed good taste. Besides, she had only known De Barreaux for a very short time, and it was despicable of him to be suspecting her of caring for another man in this way.

Fatima then crossed his brain. He put her out of it at once. It's a way men have of putting out such candles when they will—and when they can. Billy could. He loved Marjorie as he never had dreamed of loving her before. He felt such an aggression and multiplicity of power as had never before possessed him.

De Barreaux was seeking, of course, to avenge himself, by means of a flirtation with his wife—that was all. Why should not he and Marjorie smile together over it? They should. He was a man of very quick decisions. It was the New Year's first day. They two should begin all over again. He called Fatima back straight from her oblivion.

Out there in the open he would find Marjie's hand under the fox skins, hold it in his and tell her everything, from beginning to end, about Fatima and De Barreaux. He thought she would forgive him. Men always believe the woman they love will forgive the one thing which—were they called upon to forgive it in her—they would be unable to do; that is, most of them.

He slackened the Blue Fox's speed a bit, his hand went feeling about for hers and found that hand, not *unwilling*, passive. He smiled with happiness, the hap-

piness that comes to courageous, square natures when they are able and have made up their minds to have a thing out.

"Marjie," he said, with no real meaning; he could not have told why he selected to open the talk this way, but it had to be initiated in some fashion, "Marjie, you never met this musical chap, this De Barreaux, before that night at Tommy's dinner, did you?"

A second's pause.

"Yes," she replied, biting in her red, full underlip and recalling that if she wished to be strictly truthful the answer must be affirmative.

Billy suddenly remembered that the Hebrew's tacit conveyance had been that he and Mrs. Duane had not met before.

"Where?" he asks, and his hand over hers moves a little.

"Abroad."

"Did he know you were my wife then?"

"No."

Billy took his hand away. The Blue Fox needed it, perhaps.

"He did not know that until the evening at the Waldorf," she adds.

"Ah, I see! There's Tommy now!" he exclaims, as a sleigh dashes past them.

"Sally looks well, doesn't she?" Marjie says.

"Yes, oh yes, extremely well," is the answer.

CHAPTER XXXIII

New Year's Day

WHEN Bishop King came into his niece's drawing-rooms that New Year's day, he assured her it reminded him in almost every detail of the first of January in New York forty years ago. Gordon King stood at the back of his wife's chair as he said it.

Mrs. King was exquisite; a tiny lady whose white, soft hair was like silver and soft blue eyes as innocent as when her husband had led her to the altar years ago; a small pink rose still blooming in each of her cheeks, and her beautiful hands, sparkling with great diamonds set in silver, as slim and white as when he had first slipped a cirlet upon the left one. The bevy of girls were around her; the bride was there in her wedding-gown; and Marjie radiant, entrancing, in all sorts of filmy, violet fineries, with amethysts shining on her everywhere.

The table, set forth with old-fashioned hospitality in the dining-room—the last of the right-hand suite, fairly groaned beneath its weight of boned turkey, pickled oysters, sandwiches, jellies, big, frosted plum cakes, fruits, hams, chickens, game, bonbons, coffee, chocolate, punch, wines, champagne—all the fine old-time dainties.

The women were down by high noon and the men actually began to drop in before one o'clock! Everyone entered into the spirit of it, and both girls and guests seemed to think it the January first of their lives.

The centrepiece of the table was a miniature City Hall, with a miniature Mayor ascending the steps; and each man that went in was expected to admire the *neatness* of the design. They did—especially the politi-

cians. These came in fives, fours, twos and threes; presently in tens, from all the wards in the city; and no matter where they came from, or whether urged by curiosity, interest, chagrin or exultation, the mistress of the house received them with a gracious cordiality which delighted the Bishop's eye and heart.

Billy was a favorite of Gordon King's, and Marjie was the apple of his eye. Having no children of his own, his nieces stood near and dear, both to him and to the wife whom he adored.

Even Michael McGuire came to pay his respects, and he was charmed. Marjorie never reverted to Fifty-ninth Street, or letters, or Schroeder, but jested so pleasantly and tactfully with the Alderman that he found himself calling Max Schroeder more of an ass than ever.

"Bedad!" remarked Mr. McGuire, as he sank back on the cushions of Mr. Parley's coupé, after quitting the Madison Avenue house, "there's a lady for ye! I'll bet annythin' ye like, if I had the handlin' of her from this on, I'd get the Fifty-ninth Street Bill all right."

"Go on and handle her then," suggests Parley.

"I will! begorra! I will! She's got a pair of eyes and a spache wid her! and whin a lady's got thim things and a gintleman—as is a gintleman, and knows how to tackle her—goes to work, he's bound to gain his ind!"

"Or come to his ind, either one," remarks Parley.

"Go on wid ye! Maxie trated her like a fool. It's meself that'll be aisy wid her like—ax her advice, and so on, and lade her into the thrap widout her knowin' it."

"Fire away!" cries Parley sarcastically, "but if I know annything at all, at all, the Fifty-ninth Street Bill's as dead as the cat I shot in the area last night. We've got to spring it on Duane soome other way!"

"Whin Maxie gits Isaac out we'll lay our heads together, eh?" says McGuire, lighting a cigar.

"We'll thry," says the contractor. "There's wan

way, maybe, and we might as well start the ball, now that we're goin' down to call on His Honor."

"What is it?"

"I've been thinking it out iver since Ikey killed the nigger; he killed more than a man wid that shot of his, bad luck to him!"

"So he did," assents McGuire. "Well, what's yer plan?"

"The City, the great City of New York," exclaims Mr. Parley, "must own its own asphalt plant! Do ye see?" he inquires, slanting an eye at his companion.

"I do," answers McGuire, winking. "Duane'll tumble to that," he adds.

"I think he will," is the cautious response.

"It kin be worked beautiful, so it can," continues McGuire. "Sure ye kin give points to me anny time, Parley. I niver thought of that, and we and the Feenys ownin' as foine an asphalt plant as iver was!"

"Which we kin transfer to the great City of New York for—a consideration!" says the contractor, laughing.

"Betther than that!" says McGuire, "we can git the appropriation for buildin' a bran' new wan, and start it, and niver finish it, and kape on doin' the City's jobs wid our own, eh? How's that?"

"That's right; you're a wiz, you are, McGuire; and here we are at the City Hall."

Marjie had wanted her husband to take the oath up at the house before Judge Satterlee, Dan's father, and with the Bishop present and all the New Year's party.

Billy had said "yes, to be sure," the day before, when she had proposed it to him. But after their turn in the Blue Fox, Billy had only taken time to dress and rush out with Dan and bid her good-bye, and tell her he must be off downtown right away.

When would he be back? Surely for the supper and *the cotillon* in the evening?

Yes, he hoped so, but could not be sure.

As he dashed out of the house De Barreaux steamed up in his trim little runabout, with his trim little chauffeur sitting like a rocket-stick beside his master.

Billy shut his eyes—shut it all out. Got down to the City Hall, took the oath, plunged into affairs, details, red tape, anything, anything! Saw everybody, was good-humored, genial, reticent; greeted McGuire and Parley and scores of their ilk—was just the man for the place everybody said, friend and foe alike. Kept it up till six o'clock; then he went over to the Savoy and got something to eat, left, boarded an uptown car, alighted at Twenty-eighth Street, went into Procter's and sat there for a little while, not seeing much of anything that was going on on the stage. Came out, stood on the sidewalk, while the cabmen beseiged him, and asked himself if he should go home or not? He concluded not. Instead he walked around to the station house and asked to see Captain Chapman.

"What can I do for you, sir?" asked the Captain, not knowing who his visitor was in the least, but presuming him to be a society man merely.

"Lend me an officer to go through the foreign quarters with me, will you? Not for protection," said Billy, with a laugh, "but a clever man that can make some notes for me."

"Oh, you're a reporter, I suppose?" said the Captain, who thought his first size-up hadn't been correct after all. "Can't send a man with you to-night—New Year's night, you see, and the town's pretty lively—sorry. What's the name? and I'll try to oblige you some evening this week."

"The name's Duane," Billy replies with a smile. "C. C. Duane!"

"Bless my soul, your Honor! I ask a thousand pardons. I didn't know you."

"How should you?" is the reply.

"I'll go with you myself, Mr. Duane, if you'll let me; my little conveyance is on tap, sir, and it's an honor I'm sure to show you anything in my power," says Chapman.

"If you will be so good," says the Mayor. "And on the way we can have a little chat about the gambling dens in your precinct. I am very much interested in them, indeed."

"Very good, sir. This way, if you please. Carroll," to an officer, "if I'm wanted, I'm down in the foreign quarters with his Honor, the Mayor. You're in charge in my absence."

When Billy was in the trap, Chapman said: "Where to first, Mr. Mayor?"

"First, I'm incognito to-night, Captain. Second," Duane smiles as he hands the Captain a cigar and one to Carroll on the walk, too.

"All right, sir," saluting.

"Second—let me see, there are the Chinese, Jewish, Italian, French, Russian quarters, and what others?"

"The Syrian quarter, sir, in Washington Street," is the answer, "and the Swedish, which is over in Brooklyn."

Billy shakes his head. "We'll leave the Borough across the bridge for another night. I want to be perfectly familiar with all the elements of the city. I'm not; I only know them superficially. When a Turk or a Chinaman comes to me with a grievance, whether he peddles fruit or imports diamonds and tea cargoes, I want to know what he's talking about, and what his standpoint is—how he lives and trades and conducts affairs. The way to get at this knowledge, I take it, is to get right in with the people in their quarter and feel the thing myself, eh?"

"You're right, sir, but there are not many officials, I guess, that would take that amount of trouble," remarks the Captain, as he deftly guides the trap down Broadway.

"Why not?" inquires Duane sharply. "What am I elected for? To serve the people. Who are the people? They're not one set or another set or native-born only. I am the servitor of any heathen who comes here and keeps the laws of the country, and if he breaks them I'm in my place to see that he mends. Now, Captain, where are you going to pilot me first?"

"Well, sir," said Chapman, "if you don't object, I believe I'll run her down through Washington Square to lower Fifth Avenue, through the French quarter; then over to the Ghetto, and so on, fetching up in Little Syria."

"Very good. Take all night if you like—I'm in no hurry," says the Mayor.

"We'll bring up in the village of Ahl-esh Shemal, as they call it, about four A.M., sir," says Chapman.

"Do they sit up all night down there?" Billy asks.

"No, your Honor, but they rise early in the mornings."

"Oh, I see."

CHAPTER XXXIV

New Year's Night

DE BARREAU made his formal call on Mrs. Duane and left in ten minutes. He promised to return for the cotillon by eleven-thirty, or earlier, if he possibly could, after filling an engagement to play at Sherry's for the Stony-Wold benefit.

"Will you dance with me again to-night?" he asked of Marjorie, in a low tone, before he went away.

"Perhaps," is the answer. She was thinking of Billy and of how she was going to dance with him. She was thinking how good it would be to once more feel his strong, big arm around her, and to have him guide her, as no one else ever could, in a two-step.

"I shall live on hope," he says, going.

"Indeed you won't!" cries Dolly, eyeing him, and having caught his last speech.

"He'll live on chicken—the white meat, with dainty salads and perfumed ices and sherbets with violets stuck in them and frosted rose-leaves and crystallized fruits—and kisses!" she proceeds. "I know just the kind of a man he is. Like the foam of the sea and the light of the moon and—à propos!" she exclaims, clapping her hands as Seaborough enters; "Lord Seaborough, who is it that is very often full, and yet never drank a drop in his life?"

"Give it up," says the Earl promptly.

"Give it up, Miss Dolly!" echo all the men, while the girls shake their heads, too.

"Man in the moon!" cries the Child.

"Dolly!" says Imogene, "children should be seen

and not heard—you ought not to be here. Mama is going to bring her out next winter, too,” she adds in a lowered voice.

“No, she’s not!” exclaims Dolly. “Mama can’t do the impossible—in that line!—Dolly’s never been in in her life, so she can’t be brought out very well!”

“I should say, Miss Dolly, if I may be allowed,” puts in Cecil Haven, “that you were always ‘in it’!”

“Oh, come now,” says Dick Peevor, “don’t you mean ‘in’ to Seaborough when he calls in Fifteenth Street?”

They all laugh.

“Listen,” cries the Child. “Play we are minstrel misses and——”

“Can’t do that, Miss Dolly,” responds Frederick Irving. “You could never be a miss at anything.”

“Oh, I say, now, look at Seaborough, knitting his brow, trying to think up a better one!” Tommy nods toward his Lordship.

“If he’ll knit me a pair of socks out of his brow I’ll wear them!” cries the Child.

“He couldn’t, Dolly dear, even by the sweat of his brow, knit you one pair!” chimes up Gerry Knox. “He’s too lazy!”

“Aren’t you ashamed?” exclaims Jessie Pomeroy.

“Now, as I say, let’s play we’re minstrel misses. I’ll put the questions, and you all try to answer them.”

“Go on!” says Carolyn Ward.

“When’s a lady like a cigar?” inquires Dolly.

“When she’s smoking?” answers Phyllis.

“Wrong.”

“Give it up!” they all cry.

“When she’s in her wrapper!”

“Oh—oh! that’s awful.”

“What’s the only thing the modern woman doesn’t want to be ‘up’ in?”

A long pause.

“Give it up?” queries the interlocutor. “Now,

Lord Seaborough, you should be able to answer that because it's founded on an English idiom."

Seaborough shakes his head.

"Years!" exclaims the Child delightedly. And every one laughs, including Mrs. King.

"Exceptions, Dolly, dear!" cries "my Lady Silverlocks," as her husband called her. "I don't regret being 'up' in mine."

"Ah, but you—you, Mrs. King, are different, you're up to the Bishop's heart, every time," and she bent and kissed the beautiful hand of the Bishop's wife. Dolly was not a bad sort after all.

"Now, what's that which the more it's contracted the more it expands?" she proceeds. "Give it up?"

They all nod.

"A bill!"

"Who is it that generally makes a cold dinner warm? Give it up?" arching her eyebrows.

"Yes, give up any and everything to you!" murmurs Seaborough.

"The husband who has to eat it!" cries she rapturously.

"Miss Dolly, you are certainly the source of wisdom," laughs Aleck Le Roy.

"You may bet on the 'sauce,'" replies Mrs. Prop-
per's youngest; "I don't know about the wisdom."

"Do stop, Dolly!" says Betty Davies, "my muscles are positively tired out laughing."

"Mussels," repeats the incorrigible. "Miss Betty, how about your oysters?"

"Dolly," says her sister, "if you don't behave yourself, I shall certainly tell mama and you will not be allowed to celebrate your birthday next week."

"Don't want to," says the junior, "I celebrated one birthday in my life, fifteen years ago, and that was quite enough to last until the end."

A half-dozen new men were announced and the honors

done. Up to eleven o'clock they kept dropping in; and every one expressed delight in Mrs. Duane's return to the old-fashioned custom. Most of the married men said their own wives and daughters were already determining to follow suit another season.

Then gradually the calling contingent ceased, and the twenty or thirty invited for the supper and cotillon began to arrive. But the master of the house did not turn up. De Barreaux was back punctually at half after eleven. Marjorie received him with a quick, impetuous gladness that raised him at once to a seventh heaven; had he but known that it was, so far, only the rebound from her acute disappointment and mortification at her husband's failure to be with her, his joy might have been tempered. Billy had done nothing the whole day long that she had planned or wanted. He had not taken the oath there at home, he had not been home since he went out after their turn in the Blue Fox; his promise, half withheld it is true, to be back for the supper and dance, was broken.

Yes, she was glad to see the Hebrew. He had said he would be with her at eleven and a half and he was there. Like most of her sex, it was more in her eyes that a man kept an appointment to the minute, than that he took a city or wrote a book as wise as Solomon's. She did dance with him undoubtedly, and a great deal—so much in fact, that it came to be remarked by some of the older men and women who were present, Mrs. Proper among them.

"She certainly looks her best dancing with the Pole," comments this matron to her elder daughter.

"She looks far better when she dances with Mr. Duane," is Imogene's reply.

"Pouf! her own husband! That would be tiresome."

"Will it be tiresome, mama," puts in Dolly, "for you to dance, when Mr. Stowe gets to be your husband, with him?"

Mrs. Propper does not answer; her light, peculiar eyes travel across the room to Jack Stowe's face; they met his eyes. Strange how some of these flippant, artificial, apparently only inch-deep women develop a fund of intense and implacable passion when they happen to encounter the right man.

"Imogene," says the mother, finally, "I have refrained from asking you before, in the hope that you would tell me without that formality, has Lord Seaborough proposed to you yet?"

Imogene shook her head.

"Well, I must say!" exclaims Mrs. Propper.

"Say on, mama dear!" chirrups the Child. "Seaborough has proposed to me a few more times. I'm taking him into consideration, too!"

"You!" says the mother. "You are of no use to me." She speaks with bitterness as she beholds a woman at the other end of the room who has so far refused to recognize her, and who will continue so to do more emphatically should she become Mrs. Stowe.

"I don't see, mama," says Imogene, "why you can't be satisfied if Dolly becomes Lady Seaborough as well as if it were I!"

"Don't you, indeed!" is the response. "Well, I'll explain. Dolly can't be married in all conscience under a year——"

"I told him two," interrupts the junior.

"And," continues Mrs. Propper, "what I want is the moral and social support that having the wife of the richest and most powerful Earl in England for my daughter would give me, now, in the crisis of my unhappy life—now, when I shall soon marry the man of my heart!"

"Oh!" says Imogene, mournfully.

"Oh!" echoes Dolly antagonistically.

They are not yet dancing, either of the three, and are sitting apart in the library.

"I must say, I think my children owe me something," she plaints pensively.

"I should say they did, mama!" endorses the younger cheerfully.

"A debt they can never pay," continues Mrs. Proper, trying to think of herself as the martyr she never has been.

"Right you are!" cries Dolly. "Nothing but murder can ever aptly repay any mother for launching helpless babes on this weary world without so much as asking their permission or consent!"

"Dolly!" says Mrs. Proper.

"Dolly!" iterates Imogene.

"There's something somewhere about thankless children and serpent's teeth," murmurs Mrs. Proper.

"There is," remarks Dolly. "It says that the serpent's teeth would find a good meal in the flesh of the mothers and fathers that brought the children up to have nothing to thank them for! At least that's the Dolly Proper—or improper—version of Billy Shake-the-speare for you!"

Mrs. Proper raised her eyes to the ceiling and laughed, just as she used to do when Dolly was four years old and said "cute things"; which, of course, was just exactly the most admirable method in the world for having her turn out even worse than she had.

"Where is Mr. Duane?" inquires the oldest woman suddenly and with point.

"Not here," replies the Child. "Bother Mr. Duane! Mrs. Duane doesn't care where he is. Look at her!"

Marjorie, all the while she had been dancing with De Barreaux or anyone else, had purposely and ingeniously guided over to the library, where a tall clock stood in a corner, under the staircase that led to the upper shelves. She had watched the hand move slowly around and around the big, old, Dutch face twice. Billy had not come yet. She had set forward the supper hour;

still he did not come—she could delay it no longer; people were surfeited with ices and hungry for more substantial things.

So they had supper and lots of merrymaking over the big New Year's cake, with a ring in it, which Marjie said meant marriage within the twelvemonth to whoever got it—Imogene was the one, much to her mother's chagrin; over the big tissue-paper bag, suspended in one of the arches and stuffed with flour and presents, which burst, showering them all, when Dickey, blindfolded, struck at it thrice with a cane, while they all sang "Sally Waters." Still Billy did not arrive. But they drank his health. The Bishop proposed it before he and Mrs. King left.

One other person watched the clock and the front door as closely as Mrs. Duane—De Barreaux. The girls and younger men went back and had another dance or two after supper, and then the affair broke up. Marjie asked Imogene to stop for the night with her. Imogene, nothing loath, accepted. Dickey lingered, hovering carefully over Mrs. Propper until finally she and Jack Stowe, among the last, got away. De Barreaux went upstairs and got into his fur coat and came down, the very last person—except Dick and his wife, who were safely ensconced in the third drawing-room, the moment Mrs. Propper's back was permanently turned. Mrs. Duane stood at the entrance, where she had been speeding her parting guests. It was near the front door. She looked eagerly each second for Billy to come.

As the Hebrew came down, she said to the butler: "Allison, you need not sit up any longer. I will touch the button myself and put out the lights when it is necessary." The man bowed and quitted his post, motioning as he went along the hall to the six footmen, who stood at intervals, to come downstairs with him. He had comprehended that the dismissal was wholesale.

Billy did not come, and De Barreaux was going!

Well, she was sick at heart. Then, in a flash, she recollected herself. She was stupid, silly, foolish. It was after three o'clock. Of course De Barreaux must leave.

"Going?" she says, with a bright smile, and putting out her ungloved hand frankly. "Good-night."

He took it in both of his and shook his head. She breathed very deeply and drew away her hand, stood still and said nothing. He slipped off his fur coat and then with his quick, all-seeing, wonderful glance around, taking in every detail of place and circumstance, he put his arm about her, scarcely touching her, save lightly on the folds of chiffon on her shoulders, and led her farther into the rooms—their whole length, through even the dining-room—and so back into the beautiful, famous conservatory that Billy Duane had built on to his town house for his bride, five years before.

"I am going to stop a little while, if I may?" Isidoro De Barreaux says as they reach the fountain and Marjie slips down upon the seat beside it.

The waters splash and spill and gush from the vases of the nymphs; the whole place is fragrant with the odors of the splendid, tropical flowers whose great clusters swing above their heads. The spray showers mistily on her hot little hands as she holds them out toward it. The place is a blaze of light, the electric globes in their pale green cups make of it a very polarization of brilliancy. De Barreaux stood a moment and looked at her. How perfect she was, how beautiful, how desirable, how unutterably lovely, how sorrowful, how exquisitely appealing! He quivered in every nerve. He looked about and spied what he sought, the button on the wall. It was just behind the tall rose-tree there. He stepped to it, touched it, and the conservatory was dark. Dark, save for one streak of cool, white light that came in through the palms at the entrance to the dining-room.

She did not move. Through it all, even up to this strange moment, her ear was quickened to hear if Billy

were not coming in. Quivering still, his outstretched hands shaking, the Pole came up beside her and knelt down.

"May I—ah, I must tell you that I love you. Not how I love you—that I cannot ever hope to express—but that I do." His arms are around her slender waist, he has forgotten utterly both Duane and the revenge that he considers he owes; he is absorbed, submerged in the one, great, indisputable, heavenly fact of his passion for this woman.

She does not shrink away from him, she breathes no more quickly, she is a little glad of his words. To her to be loved was the bread of life. And to be loved in this sweet, supplicating, new, wonderful way was entrancing. Other women who were married allowed themselves to be loved, why should not she? Love like this man's love for her would never urge her into wrongdoing. It was very, very delicious—and Billy did not care. Billy had not come home.

His head sank now down upon her lap. She laid her hand on his hair. The gratuitous touch thrilled to his soul.

"Marjorie! Marjorie!" whispered the Hebrew, as he lifted her hand away, raised his head, and stood up. "You will make a madman of me."

"No," she says, with a little smile, her tone so cool and light and sweet that its note aches at his heart. He would have had it warmer, nearer, ah! so very, very much nearer.

"Do you know what it means, my loving you?" he asks, now coming to her side again.

"Yes," she answers.

"What does it mean, my darling?"

"That we must never see each other again," she says, slowly, while his hands, in the darkness, have sought and found her own once more.

"No! a thousand times no!" exclaims De Barreaux,

hotly. "I have found you, I will never—do you hear me?—never give you up!"

She actually laughed. To laugh is a great refuge in a crisis like this.

"Oh!" he cries, "your laughter is only a fan that makes the flame burn brighter. Sweetheart of my soul, we can never part!" His voice, his touch, his atmosphere, all were penetratingly soothing and sufficing to her. Nevertheless she rose and said: "But we will part, just now."

"No." He bent and kissed her shoulder. "No!" he repeats.

"Yes," she says, "you must go."

"You accept my love, you need it, you deign to let me love you, Marjorie?" He is almost insane with the apparent triumph of his courage.

She is standing now in the slip of white light under the palms, leaning a little against one of them; her draperies clinging about her, her dark head resting on the rough bark of the tree—a very pure young creature; her face so pale as to seem like a spirit's, were it not for the small, mocking smile that parts her lips.

"Jehovah!" cries the Pole, under his breath. "You are so adorable that I am not answerable for what I say. Marjorie, I can make you love me! I can give you the kind of happiness you have never had—no, never!" he hurries on, his words pouring out in a torrent as he catches at the sashes of her gown and holds them tensely. "You are forsaken, my beloved, by him who should be your slave and worshipper. Bah! What does Duane know of the mettle of such a creature as you are! Listen to me. Promise me that some day, when you are free, you will give me a little love in return for mine?" He is on his knees; he is clasping her about as a dying man might clasp a miraculous statue; he is crying to her out of the depths and from the heights of his soul; the best there is in him is being thrown down before her.

"I beg! I implore! a grain, a crumb of hope, of comfort, Marjorie, my Marjorie?"

She sighed. She drew herself away from him, she put out one hand above him. He took it, rose, laid it in, in, on his heart. She had never felt anyone's heart beat so before. She sprang back and went into the library and told Dickey it was time for him to go home.

De Barreaux and Mr. Peevor went off together, talking about plays and music and managers and the stage.

Marjorie and Imogene went upstairs—the latter to sleep, the former to sit before the fire until daylight, listening for Billy's footstep. Then to go to bed, not having heard it.

CHAPTER XXXV

The House Without a Staircase

It's on Fifth Avenue, just around from Thirty-fourth Street; five stories, with a large and handsome bay-window projecting from the second. The windows, every one of them from top to bottom, are immaculately curtained both in the French and English styles. The approach, the carriage-block, the area, stoop, and vestibule are all faultless; so is the page boy who opens the door.

The hall is different from the hall of any other house in New York, inasmuch as this being merely an average house—twenty feet in width by a hundred in depth, the rooms lying to the south of the hall—the hall extends back eighty feet in a clear, unbroken line fifteen feet wide. There is no staircase. That is the peculiarity of the house. At the end of the hall there is an elevator with two sets of bronze doors. Beyond the elevator there is a blank wall and presumably a butler's pantry and it was surmised a staircase leading down to the kitchen and other household offices.

This house belonged to Bridget O'Leary, Michael McGuire's cousin, the most fashionable, exclusive, and extravagant dressmaker in the United States.

As one entered the hall, one passed between a double row of marble columns; there was a statue of a fisher-boy to the right, between two palms; there was a magnificent silk rug on the marble floor; there was a fine bronze lamp hanging from the frescoed ceiling. The portières were of old rose satin and the woodwork and doors of the rooms were white.

The page boy opened one of them and showed Imogene

Propper in. Mr. Peevor was with her—he had just joined her on the sidewalk; he was flushed and excited.

Imogene had come to try on some gowns which she was to wear at different functions. It was yet early in the day for Madam O'Leary's patrons; there was no one else in the splendid waiting-room. The page said he would tell Hochstein (the fitter) that Miss Propper had come and then he disappeared.

"Imogene!" cried Dickey. "We'll not have to hide behind pianos and things any more when I want to kiss you, dear—the play's taken!" Mr. Peevor is pacing up and down Madam O'Leary's fine apartment, hands in pockets, mock independent, in great form, radiant.

"Oh!" exclaimed his wife, tearful with joy, "oh, Dickey! Not really?"

"Yes." He sits down now, and puts his arm around her.

"Tell me all—everything. There'll be lots of time. Madam always keeps me waiting—I don't count, you know."

"You will count pretty soon, though, and then no more of this d—excuse me—this wearing clothes to order like a—a——"

"Sandwich man!" Imogene finishes, laughing. "Go on, dear," she adds, "tell me about the play." She smooths out the frown on her liege lord's brow with one finger.

"Well," he says, prisoning the pretty hand, "it's all Seaborough!"

"Seaborough?"

"Yes. I wouldn't lisp it to you until something materialized. It has. Seaborough's cousin is Cyril Mervyn, the actor-manager over in London. Seaborough took the manuscript, sent it to him. Mervyn has accepted it; I've got the contract signed and £250 advance royalty in my pocket, little woman. What do you think of that?"

"Oh, Dickey! I'm so glad I can't speak!"

"It's a chance of a lifetime. Mervyn's a superb producer and Olga Nethersole is to play the lead."

"Dickey!"

"And the only changes he wants"—Imogene's smile faded a bit, she had had word before today of the "only changes" that managers required—usually resulting in an entirely new play!—"are," proceeds her husband, "the transposition of Act three for Act four, a new character written in for an eccentric comedian, a couple more lovers, a scrap of ballet business in Act two"—Imogene gasps—"a good strong kissing and hysterical bit for the star" proceeds the playwright, "and only just one new Act entire—the first!"

"Is that all?" queries the girl-wife with a queer little laugh.

"Jove! my dear child, that's nothing! Frohman wouldn't read it at all; Brady told me I knew all about writing serious business but had no notion of comedy; Dillingham said——"

"No matter, darling, it's taken."

"Isn't Seaborough a trump?"

Imogene nods. "He's doing it all for Dolly's sake," says Dolly's sister.

"I supposed as much. He's straight; I hope he'll get her. Now, my dear, where's your mother?"

"I don't know. I stopped at Mrs. Duane's last night, as you know. Why?"

"I must see her at once and tell her we're married."

"Oh, but Dickey!" Imogene is appalled at the prospect of introducing a mere play-author to her mother as a son-in-law—"wait a little while longer, please!"

"Very well. I'll wait until to-night. I must leave you now—I've got to see Seaborough and thank him."

"Here he is!"

The page draws aside the portière and shows his Lordship in.

"I beg pardon. I just stopped in a moment. Mrs. Propper said she and Miss Dolly were due here for a fitting and that I might—" he exclaims—but further speech of his is stopped by these two radiant, grateful, hopeful young persons. He receives thanks bashfully as most nice men do, and hastens to change the subject.

"Speaking of plays," he says, "I'm wanting to give a little theatre party for Miss Dolly?" He looked at Imogene.

"It must be a *matinée* then, Lord Seaborough," is the reply to his questioning glance.

"I suppose so." The Earl's tone is mournful. "Very awkward affairs—beg pardon—your theatres over here," he remarks; "very awkward—and your *matinées* especially so. I went to one the week after I landed, at the Criterion, to see Julia Marlowe, and I've never ventured near another."

"Why not?" chime husband and wife in surprise.

"Well, you see, I went in and sat down in the *parquette*, as you call it I believe, and I was a bit early. Presently the audience began to come in. It was all girls, lovely girls—all sorts of beauties, don't you know: blonde and brunette and chestnut and *cendrée* and *dorée*—really charming creatures. I was between two of them—I mean in the midst of dozens of them: I was the only man in your *parquette*. And then presently they began it, don't you know." Lord Seaborough leaned forward on his cane, resting his chin on top of it and nodding most expressively with an almost pathetic air.

"Began what?" they both query breathlessly.

"To undress!" he says, with a sigh.

Imogene's eyes opened wide. Dickey smiled.

"First," says his Lordship, "they took off their galoshes—it was a rainy day; next they took off their gloves, then their veils, a vast number of pins, scarfs, boas; then they removed their hats, then their coats, then *many* of them took off mufflers and under-jackets; and

when they began unbuttoning these subway garments, don't you know, I concluded I'd gotten into a bathing establishment and that before things went any greater distance perhaps I'd better leave!" He was pensive and calm.

"I know!" exclaims Imogene. While Dickey, in a burst of merriment, made his exit. "I know! it's really awful, it is. Mrs. Duane is the only woman in New York who will not and never has taken off her hat and things in a theatre. She won't do it. She says women should have their heads covered in all public places and she vows she's going to start a crusade for the rehabilitation of the hat in theatres, churches, etc., just like her Anti-Noise crusade."

"I hope she will!" sighs the Earl. "Because, as it is going on, you know, it's very embarrassing. You see a man doesn't quite know when the girls are going to stop, and, jests aside," he adds, stalking up and down—for he had, of course, risen when Dick went out—"if the women only knew that the decent men prefer them in hats in public places—only let 'em wear decent small hats, don't you know——"

"Exactly!" says Imogene.

—"And not, don't you see, pull out combs and powder-bags and cologne-flasks and all that and begin to use them. Bless my soul! don't you know, I expected nothing else, if I'd stopped in there two minutes more, than—ahem! Well—Venuses and Junos and Eves and all that sort of thing. I did!"

"Here's Dolly now, and mama!" exclaims Imogene, aptly.

They come in. A gleam of hope irradiates the maternal orb as it beholds her eldest alone with the Earl. She would have turned and fled had she dared.

"Seaborough, you here?" cries Dolly.

"Precisely, Miss Dolly. Mrs. Propper, your most devoted."

The last named, after considerable urging, consents to the matinée theatre party, and thereby renders the proposed giver of it a very happy fellow.

"I thank you most humbly, Mrs. Propper. I was so much in doubt, don't you know, didn't quite know what to do!" the young man joyfully bubbles over.

"Mama says," breaks in the Child, "when in doubt go upstairs at O'Leary's and make sure."

"Of what?" inquires his Lordship.

"Losing!" replies the Child.

"I am lost already," returns he, with an expressive look into her face.

"Oh, no, my dear boy, not quite yet, although I'll admit you're making every preparation to that end," says Dolly.

"Not since I've met you!" he remarks in a low tone, adding more loudly, "Now tell me, what's upstairs at O'Leary's?"

"There isn't any stairs," exclaims the mother with a laugh.

"Oh!" gasps the Earl, "so there isn't! How very odd! Nothing but the lift, eh? But in case of a fire?" He puts his glass in and wanders around the hall, prospecting.

"The fire's all up there," says Imogene.

"Yes," adds Dolly, blithely, "you can get burned any day you choose above!"

"It's generally to be had below!" is his reply.

"Stop!" cries Imogene, "both of you. Don't you know?" she says, turning to the Englishman.

"Bless my soul, no!" he answers, adding under his breath as the fitter enters the room, "is it a private lunatic asylum?"

"No," whispers Mrs. Propper, "it's keno and roulette and the bridge that carries us all over or under."

"Oh, I see!" he replies, with a laugh. "Er—Miss

Dolly—would Mrs. Propper permit you to go for a little walk up the Avenue with me? ”

“ Alone? ” exclaims Mrs. Propper.

“ No, mama,” returns the younger daughter. “ Don’t believe we could arrange Fifth Avenue at 11 A.M. of a fine day so as to have it quite to ourselves, eh, Seaborough? ”

“ Dolly! ” exclaims the mother.

“ Folly! that’s my rhyme! ” responds Missy, beckoning to his Lordship with her pretty eyes. “ Come on, England, let’s go and I’ll let you lift the cup certain.”

“ Dolly! ” says her sister reprovingly. Seaborough had just lately lost a pile on the yacht races.

Dolly only nods. “ Certain,” she goes on, “ he shall lift the cup of strawberry soda to my lips at Huyler’s! Ta! ta! ”

“ Dolly! ” says Mrs. Propper, whom the fitter, Hochstein, has by this gotten into her new coat.

“ Stop a moment. I want his Lordship’s opinion on this coat. There! ” She swings about in front of the mirrors before the trio.

“ It’s exquisite—perfect! ” declares the Earl. “ I’m sure I never saw so smart a coat! ”

“ Come! ” says Dolly, and off they go.

“ It’s rash of me, I suppose,” remarks the mother, eying the departing pair.

“ You might as well,” is Imogene’s answer.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Hochstein

HOCHSTEIN pulls down the skirts of the long brown coat.

"So, Madame," he exclaims with a sigh of relief that—trivial matters being disposed of—his own more important affair can receive the attention it merits; "it fits Madame as the skin does the fawn, n'est-ce pas, Mademoiselle?" to Imogene.

"Better, Hochstein, better!" exclaims Mademoiselle.

"You've lined it throughout with that brocade, though, and I told you not to."

"Ah, Madame!" soothes the Viennese, "it was not to spoil the coat of Madame with the one-half lining!"

"But, Hochstein, I can't afford it!"

"Madame can afford anything. *Que voulez-vous!* Madame, who is always lucky upstairs!" He nods upward.

"Hochstein, I lost three hundred night before last!" murmurs the matron.

Imogene glances up from the *Revue de la Mode*.

"Madame! three hundred! a bagatelle! a nothing! Madame will recoup and win a thousand this week, as was the case last month!" purrs he softly.

"I hope so!" is the fervent answer. "Now, that lining—four dollars a yard, isn't it?"

"No, Madame," with suavity, "no, it's five."

"Five!"

"Yes, Madame, only five to you!" with honied sweetness.

"Oh, Hochstein, you are a fox!"

"Alas. Madame. no! Not such wise animal. Only

the fitter of a dressmaking establishment, and in the evenings, perhaps, a little something else!"

The Austrian, who had been bred in Paris, shrugged his shoulders and patted the ermine trimmings of the coat.

"It becomes Madame?" he says, regarding Imogene for endorsement.

"It does," says the daughter.

"Although Madame is a trifle pale," adds he with wile.

"Am I?" she cries in alarm. "I pale?"

"It is sad to speak the truth, Madame, but Madame is pale and a little—thick!"

"Hochstein! Not thick?" in horror. "Anything but a thick complexion!"

"Madame, it is true." Hochstein sighs with a melancholy emphasis that would have been no discredit to Hamlet himself. "Is it not, Mademoiselle? I leave it to Mademoiselle!" he exclaims, shaking his head.

"Mama's complexion is not quite up to the mark to-day," is Imogene's rejoinder, while, with the Revue de la Mode upside down, she is secretly wondering what mama will say when her Dicky reveals their joint secret.

"Aha! you see, Madame," with sorrowful triumph.

"Well," says Mrs. Propper. "Hochstein, you must come to my rescue. What have you got that's new and non-detectable and won't rub off and of the exactly right tint?"

"Ah, Madame!" with resignation tempered by reflection, "the tint of Madame is so difficult, I do not know. I must think, think!"

"Imogene," said Mrs. Propper, "do go upstairs and try on your gowns. Madame O'Leary must be ready for you by this time. Go, dear." Mrs. Propper was occasionally a little irked by her elder daughter.

Imogene went up in the elevator to the third floor, and was put into a dozen different gowns and paraded

up and down for the dressmaker, who paid her her salary, to look at and comment upon.

"Now, Hochstein," said Mrs. Propper. "Think out loud, please. What is there that's new and good?"

"In the white or the pink, Madame?"

"Oh, pink, of course," impatiently.

"This, Madame." He drew from his pocket a tiny silver tube, unscrewed the top, tipped it to his forefinger; "Madame permits?" he hesitates a second.

"Oh, go on, quick," she says peremptorily. "There must be a first time for everything."

With the touch and air and eye of a veritable artist, Hochstein rubbed in on Mrs. Propper's still round and very smooth cheeks just the hint of color which they needed to accentuate her eyes and the red of her lips.

"Ah-h!" the fitter sighed, as he stepped back to survey his work.

"Is it harmless?" she asks. She had never used anything pink before, although the Viennese has guilefully intimated it to her, and she is nervous over the initiative.

"Look! Madame, I eat!" He sucks his fingers with evident relish.

"Pardonnez moi," with humility, "but Madame is now beautiful." He bows with deference.

To be called "beautiful" by any one is very agreeable to most women.

"Is it dear?" she asks, picking up a hand-glass and looking at herself.

"Very cheap, Madame, on the contrary. Only five dollars," with a shrug.

"Everything is five dollars today, Hochstein," she murmurs.

"That is then a good omen. Madame should not fail to come upstairs"—he jerks his limber, vulgar thumb upward with a smiling accompaniment—"tonight and put her money on, say, fifty-five—or any combination with the two fives."

"You think so?" she says eagerly.

"Oh, Madame, do not ask me; I can only tell what I would do were I in the shoes of Madame!" his shoulders rise again.

"Two fives," she repeats. "I've never tried on two fives before! Would you really, Hochstein?"

"Ah, Madame, I would. Pardon me!" He touches her right cheek tenderly, adjusting the pink a trifle more delicately on the outer edge.

"So! Ah, Madame!" the Viennese closes his black eyes tightly and keeps them shut as he speaks; "Madame has the air, in that coat, of but twenty-two years. It is a coat fit for a trousseau; it is, Madame."

Madame is thinking of Jack Stowe. Hochstein knew she was thinking of Jack Stowe. There was very little of which the customers of O'Leary thought that Hochstein did not either know—or surmise. He was one of the wildest, cleverest, most successful fitters, designers and gamblers that either the continent of Europe or the continent of North America ever entertained. He was not only au fait of modes and styles, but he was a competent artist in women's clothes; he was poetic in his conceptions and in the carrying out of his own ideas; he adored pretty women in pretty gowns quite as a matter of art; he regarded silks, chiffons, laces and velvets as his pastime, his diversion. He was handsome; he had served in the army; he had been assistant to a magician; he had married a lady of the ballet in Berlin, and had lost her through the intervention of a certain Italian baron; he had travelled over the whole world.

These ladies of—everywhere! Ach! Mon Dieu! he knew them, as he would have said, as one knows a book. He was past-master in the artifices and schemes of the complexion, the hair, all the mysterious intricacies of what he called "*faire la beauté*"; he was supple, keen, with sufficient knowledge to be refined, sufficient vulgarity to use when he saw it would not be considered out

of the way. Such was the Hochstein of the day, O'Leary's fitter.

There was another Hochstein—Hochstein by night. He was the croupier of the roulette table; the presiding genius of the second floor of the dressmaking establishment.

"Madame, I have a little muff and toque of the cloth and the ermine en suite with the coat." He opened his eyes now and approached the row of numbered buttons near the door tentatively. "Madame will see them?"

"Hochstein, you will be the ruin of me!" She smiles.

He pressed number three, and the stately Miss Montmorency soon appeared with the muff and toque.

"Put them on," the fitter says to the model. "This coat also," removing it from Mrs. Propper. "Let Madame see all together."

The finely formed, pretty English girl sailed up and down the long room with an air of superb superiority, as if she were a duchess indeed, at the least.

"So Madame, you see the effect is exquisite. I am sure if the English milord had waited to behold the ensemble he would have been enchanted. Why does not Madame bring him—upstairs—some evening?" The Viennese fixed his small eyes on Mrs. Propper's face. She colored under the pink even.

"Take off those things," he commanded Miss Montmorency. "That is all—you may go. Madame will take the toque and muff?" he smoothed them caressingly.

"The price?" she inquired.

"They are thrown in with the coat," is the reply, as he still keeps his gaze fixed upon his patron.

"Oh—preposterous! Impossible," she says.

"Oh, no, Madame, no. Nothing is impossible. Madame will bring the English milord upstairs? Nothing is impossible."

Mrs. Propper sighed and shook her head.

"I can't, Hochstein, really I can't accept anything more."

"Oh, Madame!" soothingly.

"No," she repeats. "I took that violet velvet in October, and agreed to introduce Mrs. Duane here. I could not persuade her even to listen to the idea. She pooh-poohed it; said she didn't believe O'Leary had any such thing in her house, and that her husband would not approve, and so forth."

"Oh, Madame, the little matter of Mrs. Duane! that is nothing. Mrs. Duane will come; pardon me, Madame, she will. The violet velvet is not to be thought of. I will have the toque and muff sent home with the coat. Good-morning, Madame. I thank you for your august patronage. Remember the two fives, Madame, and the English milord." Hochstein bowed himself out and away to the lift, carrying the coat over his arm.

Imogene came from the lift looking out of sorts. O'Leary had told her she was stooping a little, that she was certainly getting fat, that her head was not as well poised in consequence, and that if she did not reduce her weight she could not really retain her services any longer; that Miss Phyllis Van Antwerp, who was an inch taller and two inches broader and three less about the waist, was ready to wear her gowns and assured her of new patronage at a less salary than she (Imogene) was being paid. Imogene would have liked to tear the gown and coat and hat off that she had on and fling them at the Irishwoman's head; but she dared not yet.

"What is the matter, Im?" asked the mother.

Just then Dolly and Seaborough returned.

"Nothing," said Imogene.

"Here we are again!" exclaimed the Child. "Mrs. Duane's coming along, I saw her at Arnold's."

"Charming woman!" remarks his Lordship, making the not uncommon blunder of expressing admiration for one woman in the hearing of a certain kind of other woman.

"Lovely!" says Imogene warmly.

"I dote on her as much as I could on any one that isn't a man!" says Dolly.

"Pretty woman"—says Mrs. Propper, casting a glance at herself in the mirror opposite to her.

"But—" says the Child, "go on, mama!" She laughs heartily. "But——"

"I fear she is not a happy one."

"Happy," says Dolly, "certainly not. She's married."

"Oh, Miss Dolly," cries his Lordship.

"I fear," continues Mrs. Propper musingly, "that that fascinating Pole, De Barreaux, is more entertaining to her than Billy Duane."

"Of course he is!" says the Child. "Who ever heard of any woman's finding her own husband entertaining? Mama! you're behind the age. No—bless my soul!" Dolly walked up to her mother, seized Seaborough's monacle, stuck it in her own eye and surveyed her parent; "no!" she whispered, "you're behind the pink! oh, mama! And that's Hochstein, I know!"

"Dolly!" said Mrs. Propper severely, "hush."

"Won't do it, unless you promise to let me go upstairs once—just once—will you? If you don't I'll—tell Jack!" Missy sticks her hands in her coat-pockets and stands still. "Is it a go?" she inquires briskly.

"Yes," answered the mother, just as she used to answer when the Child brought her to bay twelve years ago on the subject of candy, fruit, or sitting up late. Then Mrs. Propper adds, remembering the exquisite toque and muff, and the likelihood of her getting the divorce very soon and wearing them as Mrs. Jack Stowe: "You may see it just once; and if you're both good children I'll let Lord Seaborough go the same evening, too."

"Where?" cried his Lordship, bewildered, as he rose from a hastily improvised tête-à-tête with Imogene, which had but seemed the obvious thing to engage in a few minutes since.

"Well," answered Dolly thoughtfully, "some people call it 'hell' and some people call it 'play.' Anyhow, you pay your money and can take your choice."

"Dolly!" cried her mother.

"Dolly!" echoed her sister.

"Just so," says the Child. "It's located upstairs in the house without a staircase, and he who presides is called 'Hochstein'!"

CHAPTER XXXVII

'At Break of Day in the Syrian Quarter

At the corner of Washington Street Billy said to the Captain:

"Put me down here and I won't trouble you any further to-night, or rather this morning, Captain."

Ordinarily the officer would have protested and urged his services upon any superior, certainly upon his Honor the Mayor; but there was something about Duane that prevented people from protesting or urging anything upon him; he was a bit stern, a trifle haughty, preëminently sure of what he did, and what he did not want. There were tones in his voice that precluded the possibility of appeal or persistence.

So Captain Chapman answered:

"Very well, sir—it has been only a pleasure, your Honor," and stopped the machine at the point indicated and Billy got out. He had left the Captain with the runabout at the Chinese quarter as well, and had explored it by himself. Now he hesitated a second as he had not hesitated about penetrating the Malay peninsular. He had been in China-land before; in the village of Ahl-esh Shemal he had not been.

St. Paul's clock was striking six; he heard the rattle of the elevated trains; to the west lay the river-front; he could hear the heavy trucks rumbling down to the steamship docks; 'longshoremen and stevedores were hurrying past him on their way to early jobs; the trolley gong cut the keen, cold air. To the west there he could feel the pulse and throb, the mad rush and hurry of the modern life, of a modern day beginning to beat

and hound its men. Here, where he now passed along, there was no fever in the veins; no push, no drive, no scramble. Under these lamps, shining from the windows of Malouf's restaurant, there was no plunge and tear and wrestle for either bread or gold.

He could see in there a group of solemn-faced, quiet men playing bezique, not for money, but for pleasure in the game. One was a poet, a rotund and merry-eyed personage, whose odes were all sad and beautiful and all printed backward in the Syrian journal every week.

There was the hint of daylight now beginning to streak into the street from the east. It was touching the panes of Malouf's windows as the Mayor of New York sauntered up.

Also at this very moment Maro, the child who had fed upon the crumbs that fell from the Hebrew's platters, sidled along from beyond. He even brushed by the Mayor, jostling him a little and at the same moment contriving, with great dexterity, to extract his Honor's handkerchief from his top-coat pocket. Then the Mayor, turning, saw the boy and being pleased with his beauty and because he was a poor child, gave him some silver. Maro laughed, when he took it, in a kind of greedy joy, and left the steps of Malouf's restaurant and ran off.

Billy was going in to have some coffee and a chat with these quaint citizens; his hand was upon the knob when a hand on the inner side also turned the brass knob. The door opened, he stood aside, for it was a woman who emerged. Her face was veiled, all but the eyes. As soon as she was well without, and the door closed, she pulled the veil down.

"Billy!" she cried, softly, pleadingly, standing quite still, her hands both hanging at her sides.

"Fatima!" said Duane.

"Yes, Fatima," she replied. "Billy, I like look at you. I may?"

He smiled. "I cannot prevent you," is his answer.

He expected a long rehearsal of the past; he was dazed, he was tired, he was enmeshed in a situation which he had not foreseen. In coming here he had never dreamed of Fatima—he had forgotten that such a person had ever existed. He was not the man to either run from, or be rude to, any woman.

So he stood still, which is a masterly stroke in dealing with other races than the Oriental; with the others it is unexpected and telling, with them it is much a matter of course and does not count.

To stand still, therefore, with Fatima was no sort of a trump card at all.

Fatima stood still too. Her large and beautiful eyes were fixed upon Billy's face with an expression of hopeless melancholy.

"Good to see you, Billy," she says.

"You are well, Fatima?" he asks, and as he makes the inquiry he thinks that even this concession in some way is robbing Marjorie. He is turning from the Syrian woman. She puts out her hand and holds him by the sleeve.

"Not well, oh no. Not ever well any more, all the years since you go away from me."

"Ah, Fatima," he murmurs in the tone of a man who cannot endure to hurt or molest any one of her sex.

"Billy, Fatima love just as always, Billy!" the voice is pleading and tender and sweet.

"Hush, hush," he says. Then he lifts her hand from his arm, and looks her squarely in the eyes. He had meant to be harsh and hard and rough, but he couldn't do it. Their past rose between them and over that bridge of past happiness they had to look into each other's eyes.

"Billy no love Fatima?" she pleads gently.

He shook his head.

"Some other?" she queries.

He nodded.

"Other love Billy?" is the next question.

He made no reply. Marjorie? Could he say that Marjorie loved him? Indeed he could not.

This woman did. There was no doubt of that. De Barreaux even had told him that Fatima was faithful to him. "Faithful" after ten years of division. And Marjorie had tired of him in five.

"Ah," the Syrian woman finally says in her dulcet, monotonous voice. "No woman of West love Billy like Fatima love, always, always, always!" Again her hand upon his arm.

Here indeed was someone who did care for him, to whom he could give happiness if he could not receive it. For an instant his soul went blind—then sight returned. He laughed a little. He wished to give her money, but something in her attitude forbade that. He left her, walked away, further on, to the other restaurant on the next block, and went in.

Fatima stood on the sidewalk. The first gleam of the sun shot down between the houses and struck upon her agonized face. The boy Maro came along looking for his mother. He showed her the handkerchief he had stolen and pointed to the embroidered initials on the corner, "C. C. D." He kept the silver a secret.

Fatima had learned to read during the past ten years. She snatched the handkerchief and kissed it and tied it around her throat inside her waist and took Maro home by the ear and beat him severely when she got him there.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"Brothers"

MRS. PROPPER permitted her younger daughter and Seaborough to walk down the Avenue together. She was getting resigned to Imogene's supposed failure to capture the Earl. She saw her worst enemy—the woman who did not recognize her now and would point the refusal to do so more clearly still when she married Jack Stowe—getting out of her brougham at O'Leary's door.

Yes. She permitted his Lordship to walk home with Dolly. She beheld her enemy reviewing the new situation. It was tantamount to an engagement. The worst enemy, whose name happened to be Loring, put up her lorgnette and stared.

"Go on, children!" warbled Mrs. Propper, in a low but perfectly audible tone, "Imogene and I will be home very soon."

Seaborough lifted his hat to Mrs. Propper, again to Mrs. Loring, who was disposed to stop him. Then he and Mrs. Propper's younger daughter went on their way, leaving Mrs. Loring slightly at a disadvantage.

"I've scored one!" exclaimed Mrs. Propper.

"You generally do, mama," is Imogene's reply.

Then they met Marjie, going to O'Leary's too.

"You look fagged, dear!" said the older woman.

"I was up late—Imogene and I both were," laughs Marjie, a bit nervously.

"When one stops up late to some purpose," smiles Mrs. Propper, "it's all right enough. When are you coming with me upstairs at O'Leary's?"

"Never, I fear."

"Nonsense! Every smart woman in town risks a little. You don't need it, of course, as some of us do, but the sport of the thing, the excitement—it would tone you up, dear, it would!" playfully.

"Ah," smiled Mrs. Duane, "you see Mr. Duane would never approve of it. He is simply mad on the subject of gambling-houses anyway and the mere idea of my going there would be—impossible."

"Don't let him know it," suggests Mrs. Propper, adding, "I don't see why you should be deprived of an innocent amusement because Billy Duane doesn't approve. Marjie, do show some spirit!" Mrs. Propper turns and looks at Billy Duane's wife as they saunter as far as the corner together.

"I fear I haven't the right kind," laughed Marjie. "I fear that if I once got up in that mysterious second floor, behind those great bronze doors, in that place which I never even suspected until you told me of it a month or two ago, Mrs. Propper—I should want to keep on going there perpetually!" Her eyes are brilliant and her speech is light. "It would fascinate me."

Mrs. Propper understood her own sex fairly well; she dropped the subject. Marjie left them and retraced her steps to the dressmaker's, had a fitting, and hurried home, just remembering that Tommy had said last evening he had seen the Syrian woman and told her to be at the Madison Avenue house today at two o'clock, to arrange about dancing at the Bi-Monthly.

When the butler opened the door he informed his mistress that "a person" was waiting to see her in the reception room, with a note from Mr. Eckford.

"Very good, Allison, send her up to my morning-room in about five minutes, please."

In five minutes Fatima was ushered into the presence of Billy Duane's wife. She had fetched the boy Maro with her, but he lurked outside in the hall,

large-eyed, wondering, speculative as to all the new things he saw. Not so the dancer. She did not glance at anything, but fixed her beautiful eyes full on her prospective employer's face.

"Sit down," said Majorie kindly. Fatima shook her head, and let her veil fall from her face; with the touches of henna and kohl she was extremely handsome.

"Madame want see me?" she said in her low, musical voice.

"Yes, about dancing for me. I have heard so much of your dancing from Mr. Eckford," says Marjorie.

"When?" asks the Syrian, her gaze devouring the lovely face of Billy's wife, scrutinizing, memorizing each trick, curve, and line of all its beauty.

"Tuesday, March 22d—I hope you have no engagement?"

"No, not have."

"You can come?"

"Yes."

"What are your terms?"

"Twenty-five dollar."

"Would you like to have it in advance?" putting out her hand for the purse on her secretary. The Syrian shook her head emphatically.

"Are you sure?" asks Marjorie with a smile.

"Yes, sure."

Maro now peeped in the crack of the door at its hinges; then he edged toward the opening and stretched out his little brown hand and plucked the silken embroidered cover from the corner table very deftly. Then, with a sweet and innocent smile he came into the room and looked at Marjorie just as his mother was about to take her leave.

"Oh, what a beautiful boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Duane. "He is yours?" she adds, perceiving the likeness at once, despite the blue eyes and curling light hair.

"Yes, mine," the Syrian answers solemnly.

"And your husband? he is in this country, with you, I suppose?"

"I have not—husband."

"Oh!" gently, "pardon me, he is—dead?"

"No: not ever have any." She smiled.

"What!" The American utters the word as if it hurt her. Her own boy Laddie came running into the room, into her arms; then, perceiving the other child, he went up to him and put out his chubby hand, as he had been taught to do to visitors, and said gravely:

"How do you do?" The Syrian boy was nothing loath, and gave his.

Fatima regarded them stolidly: then she said: "My little boy your husband's son."

Marjorie sat still, silent. She would have liked to say: "It is a lie!"—to have made some sort of sound or movement, but she could not. Her eyes were on the two children and she saw Billy Duane's eyes shining out from each little face. The Syrian woman leaned over the tall back of the chair behind which she stood. She pointed to the two boys.

"Look!" she said, "brothers."

"Hush! hush!" whispered Marjorie, rising now, her pallor as of the dead. "It—it can't be!" she groans.

"It is," is the Syrian woman's answer.

"Why do you come to me?" asks Mrs. Duane, turning on the other.

"You send for me," says Fatima.

Then the two children sat down on the floor and began to play with the marbles Laddie took from his pockets.

"Why did you tell me?" asks Marjorie.

"Don't know; it came," says the other, with that peculiar inflexion of fatalism which no pen has yet been able to describe.

"Is it money that you want?" asked Marjorie, flushing.

"No; want nothing," Fatima answered quietly.

"Did you—do you love that boy's father?" Marjorie inquired, tensely and painfully.

"Yes; love," answered Fatima.

"And he?" She wishes to know all there is to know.

"Oh, yes, say so," Fatima laughed.

Mrs. Duane put her hand to her head. She looked at the woman, then at the child. She had the impulse to snatch Laddie away from the other one but she restrained herself, with a bitter smile.

They were both Billy's sons! The son of the bond-woman and the son of the free woman.

"How are you bringing up this child?" she asked finally. "Who supports him?"

"Me. He steal a little, too." She beckons to the child, who goes to her. She extracts the table-cover from his jacket pocket. "Bad boy!—you see? I try teach him sell papers, black boots. He will not."

"The father?" says Marjorie Duane, in an agony.

"Not know about him at all," is the quiet answer. Marjorie sighed in a kind of blind relief. This child was at least ten years old. Ten years! Long before she and Billy had ever met.

Billy's son!

"Give me that boy?" she says, desperately. "I'll buy him from you. I'll educate him, make him honest, true, decent!"

"You mean?" says Fatima, the first ray of animation showing in her immobile face.

"Yes, I do."

"No need buy; I give," says the mother.

"You will?" in astonishment.

"Yes," doggedly.

"He shall be a good man."

"Are there any of those?" Fatima laughs, takes Maro by the hand and moves toward the door.

"Yes," said Marjorie, "there are. I have your address. I will send for the child in a few days. You will give him to me entirely?"

"Yes."

"You are content to know nothing about him ever any more? You are sure? To promise never to tell anyone to whom you have given him?"

"Yes. Sure. Glad. Much glad."

"Don't you love him?" asks the American woman as she lays her hand on Laddie's shoulder.

Fatima shook her head. "Love not anything, anyone, but Billy."

"Billy!"

It struck at Marjie Duane's heart like a rifle-ball aimed by an expert. Without stopping to think what she was doing, without pride, breathlessly, she said to Fatima, hoping and expecting, too, that the answer would be "ten years":

"When did you see—him—last?"

"Last night," is the answer, given with clear and simple directness. She is not looking at Marjorie and has no idea of the effect her words produce.

"Good-by; I come dance for you the twenty-two March and——"

"No! no! no!" cries Marjorie fiercely. At this moment, De Barreaux—who had some time ago received permission to come up to Mrs. Duane's boudoir unannounced any time after two o'clock—tapped on the open door and bowed very low, standing at the threshold.

"You not want me dance for you!" exclaims Fatima, salaaming to De Barreaux.

"Oh, yes! yes! yes!" Marjorie says, smiling at the Hebrew.

"Do have her, Mrs. Duane. Fatima is my best model and the only Syrian dancer in town. I am sure you will like her."

"Yes indeed," says Marjorie with perfect composure; then turning to Fatima, she says:

"Come on Tuesday, the 22d."

"I come." Fatima, leading Maro by the hand, went away from Billy's house.

CHAPTER XXXIX

How He Trusted Her

LADDIE began to cry at the loss of his new-found playmate. De Barreaux took him up in his arms and soon soothed him. He had a most beguiling method with children, as with inferiors and servants; he never missed the opportunity of saying a pleasant word to any one of them. He gave his tips, not only with discrimination, but with the recipient's name readily on his tongue; with a smile, a graciousness, that made of menials his sworn allies. His pockets always had bonbons and nuts in them; he delighted in children, birds, flowers, animals; they in turn were charmed by him.

Laddie nestled in his arms and soon forgot the Syrian boy, munching the chocolate creams that the Pole dropped one by one into his ruddy little mouth.

Marjorie felt that she must get away by herself. She looked at De Barreaux with the child in his arms. De Barreaux had not heard enough to suspect anything—she was sure of that. No one must suspect anything. And yet—well, if by-and-by it came to her leaving her husband—perhaps then she might be able to whisper it to this man who loved her so well. She bade the child stop with Mr. De Barreaux; she took a species of savage joy in seeing him close in the arms of the Hebrew. It might come to that some day. Indeed, it must come to Laddie's being forever out of his father's arms, at least, whenever she could have it so.

Oh, she was wild! She did not know what she was thinking. "Last night!"

She excused herself to the Pole, said she had letters to

write and left the two there together. She only went into the next room.

De Barreaux knew this—his ear was keen for her footstep. He sat down to the little piano and still holding the child with one arm on his knee, he played softly with the right hand, improvising and naming it "Consolation." He played for her, to her.

She heard it as she knelt down at the bedside and lived over the hours she had sat up all the previous night waiting for her husband to come home. He had not come home yet. But now, hark! that was he!

Billy came straight upstairs to the little boudoir where he was almost certain to find his wife since he had learned from Allison that she was not out. His mind, for the second time within twenty-eight hours, made up to tell her all there was to tell as to Fatima.

He heard the soft, thrilling melody from the piano. He thought it was Marjie playing: he had no idea whatever of the differences of touch, technique, or style. A piano was a piano, and the noise created upon it was, in Billy's ears, much the same whether a De Barreaux or a boarding-school miss were the executant. It required a band or an orchestra in the musical line to rouse the Mayor's pulses.

He came along the hall to the open door. The Hebrew neither saw nor heard him at first, but at that particular moment he stopped playing, rose from the stool, and reseated himself in a large chair that was an especial favorite with the master of the house. He held the little boy closer in his arms and stroked his hair with his handsome fingers. The child played with the immense sapphire set in brilliants which the Pole habitually wore, only removing it when he was at the piano. De Barreaux now took it and put it over Laddie's finger; the child laughed, slipped it off and then on to Isidoro's own hand.

Billy Duane stood these seconds and looked in on it

all: the easeful and accustomed attitude of the visitor, the innocent trustfulness and affection of the child—the child. He made a step forward. Laddie saw his father, but with the whimsicality of childhood he nestled closer in the Hebrew's arms and poked his fist in a pocket for more sweets. Duane came in.

"How are you, De Barreaux?" he said, carelessly enough. Then he bent and lifted the boy out of the musician's arms and took him over and set him on his feet in the hall. "Go up to the nursery, Laddie," he said.

De Barreaux sprang to his feet.

"Duane!" he remonstrated, resenting the father's manner, and with his resentment, all his old implacable Hebraic spirit of revenge spurring to the front.

"Well?" returned the other man, looking at him composedly. "What have you got to say for yourself?"

"Are you afraid that I will contaminate the child that you snatch him from me as if I were a leper?" asks the musician, his slow, sleepy eyes beginning to sparkle.

"I don't look at it in precisely that light," is the response.

"You do fear me!" exclaims the visitor, his usual pallor turning ashen and the steel now showing in his eyes predominantly. De Barreaux in his rage was nearer a precipice than he had ever been in his life.

"Do I?" said Billy, striking a match at the mantel and then tendering his cigar-case to the Hebrew, who roughly pushed it aside.

"Yes, you do. It is my day now and I will not do anything in the dark; I will not win from you, behind your back, as you did from me long ago! I tell you, Duane, I love your wife!" He paused as if he expected an almost fatal result from the words.

Duane continued to smoke in leisurely fashion; all the more leisurely because he would have liked to do something very different just then.

"I am aware of it," he said finally.

"I will win her if I can!" whispers De Barreaux, coming close up to the Mayor. "You may forbid me the house, you may kick me out and cowhide me, or the duello, if you see fit!" Duane shook his head slightly, still smoking—he even smiled. "You may take her away to the uttermost ends of the earth and shut her up in a prison, but I will win her from you, if I can, I swear!"

He speaks in a very low tone, but the whole man is at his acme: honest, courageous, vindictive, exalted, triumphant in his avowal, challenging the worst that can befall any man and ready to meet it.

Billy sat upon the edge of the big oaken table, swinging his crossed feet, still smoking.

"Finished?" he inquires courteously.

"Yes," the other man answered with a curious sigh.

"I believe you said just now that I feared you?" ejaculated Duane.

De Barreaux inclines his head.

"I did. You do fear me—you have cause to fear me!" he cries impetuously.

"The cause we won't discuss," remarked the host. "But, the fact is, that the only course open to a man in my position—who trusts his wife implicitly, as I do—," his voice is low, firm, including that quality of absolute positiveness from which there was no getting away, "as I do—is to tell you, Mr. De Barreaux, that instead of treating you as a blackguard deserves to be treated—with physical chastisement—my reply to all you have said is simply this: You are at liberty to come to my house whenever Mrs. Duane gives you to understand that she will see you—morning, noon, evening. You may play for her, amuse her, walk, drive, dance, and talk with her." Billy jumped from the table and flung his cigar in the fire. Up to this point he had been the calm, matter-of-fact man in his manner; now *it all changed*. He came close to the visitor.

"Fear you!" he said, with ineffable scorn. "I would trust my wife with any man that breathes. Fear!" he repeated with a bitter laugh. "I defy you."

Then Marjorie came back into the room; she did not know that Billy was there at all.

"Oh, you have come home!" she exclaims.

"Yes," he answers. "I got in about ten minutes since. By the way, what are you going to do this afternoon? Begging your pardon—" he turns toward the Hebrew, who is gracefully arranging the cushions on the divan and incidentally taking up his coat and hat. Almost any other man but Isidoro De Barreaux would have gotten away—not he. He possessed the insistent, methodical, mysterious, Oriental quality of leisureliness to a superlative degree. He never deserted any ground that was in the remotest way tenable. He stayed.

"Nothing, I think," is Mrs. Duane's reply.

"Pardon me," interpolates the musician, "Mrs. Duane, but you promised me that you would take a turn with me in my new electric landaulette; it is a beauty. You will come?"

"I didn't promise you anything of the kind!" she laughs. "That is an invention!"

"If it is, Mr. Duane will pardon it, I am sure, for he has just told me that he would trust you with me anywhere."

"Has he?" She smiled faintly. "Billy is generous to his old college chum," she says. "I am sure that settles it, Mr. De Barreaux—I will go."

"Ah, thank you. Perhaps Mr. Duane also would join us?" How deliciously the "us" rolls upon his lips. It has the sweetness of the honey of Hybla to his soul. He is positive this open carelessness of the husband's cannot but widen the breach into which he will jump, the victor.

"No, thank you. I believe not. I've no time for anything but business nowadays. I may be home for

dinner, Marjie, and I may not," he adds with a bow to De Barreaux and the lightest finger touch on his wife's bare arm. He left them.

It is hard, if not impossible, to play two games with one hand. At every stroke that Duane made good against De Barreaux he involved himself still more deeply against his wife. As he quitted her, she almost unconsciously, under cover of looking out the window, rubbed the spot he had touched on her arm with her handkerchief.

De Barreaux saw it. He was intoxicated with joy. She must abhor her husband! He set it down to an inherent dislike, disgust. He never mistrusted that the Syrian had spoken. He knew Fatima very well; she possessed none of the impulses of the average Occidental woman; she regarded Billy's marriage and his wife with the uncomplaining resignation and acceptance which would have smiled at a vulgar retaliation or a hint of pain to the wife. It did not enter into her scheme of life at all that Marjorie should be hurt or surprised at the fact of Maro's existence or disturbed by the love his mother still held for his father.

De Barreaux then, perceiving Marjorie's movement, was happy.

"I see the trap is already here," she says, turning toward him.

"Do you like it?" he inquires, standing close to her, both of them before the long cheval glass. He turned her gently, so that she should see the double reflection.

"What?" she asks playfully.

"You and I together, so—alone," he replies. She laughed and broke away.

"I am going to get on my hat and furs," she says, then hesitatingly, "shall we take Laddie?"

He followed her near the door, and said very low in her ear, with impassioned and unmistakable meaning, "we will take Laddie with us always—everywhere."

CHAPTER XL

Dan and Eva

"IMOGENE," said Marjie, two or three days later, "I am going up to Nova Scotia for a little. I shall not be away long. I am going to put the child of a—friend—there at a boarding-school. No one knows of it but you. I want you to promise me no one ever shall hear of it at all, from you?"

"I promise you, Marjie dear," the girl says, with simple directness. She was the soul of honor.

"I am supposed to be going down to the Westbury house for a few days to look after the improvements we are making. I am not taking any servant with me—it is a thing that must be done alone. Even my name is not to be used; I shall be known up there as Mrs. Arnold."

Imogene's eyes opened, but she said nothing; she patted her friend's hand and felt sure that if Marjorie Duane was engaging in a secret enterprise it was a good one. She was delighted with it, too; what healthy, normal girl does not love a mystery?

"I want a favor of you—or rather of Dickey," Marjorie goes on.

"Granted—I'll answer for my boy!" Imogene laughs.

"I shall have to have letters from these people in Nova Scotia. I want to know if they can come to Dick's care—for Mrs. Arnold?"

"Of course they can."

"Thank you, dear."

It was simply said. The two women clasped hands,

looked in each other's eyes and each knew that she could trust the other. Marjie had been aware, from the day of its occurrence, about Imogene's marriage, but she never betrayed the knowledge by even a glance.

Imogene now went home and Marjie turned to her correspondence. The routine of course was attended to by her secretary, but for reasons she could hardly explain, of late she had herself looked over and replied to the letters which Eva Elliott sent almost daily from the West.

"The Anti-Noise Crusade"—so called by the papers—was gaining adherents in every state in the Union. People had actually and gleefully burned pianos in more towns than New Bremen. The piano manufacturers were now joining forces with the music-teachers for a revolt against the Anti-Noise people and their emissaries were hurling great bolts of irony, ridicule, and obloquy upon their opponents. The churches and schools and factories were falling into line, and through outbursts of opposition and raillery the bells and whistles were gradually clanging and shrieking less and less.

Imperceptibly Miss Elliott's position had developed into a tour of the country—the tracts she had distributed were no longer sufficient to satisfy the demand. The people wanted to be told by the living voice how they could be entitled to lead quieter and more peaceful lives. So Eva Elliott found herself one day in a large Ohio town delivering a lecture!

Whereupon she was besieged by bureaus and agents all over the land requesting the pleasure of "booking her tour!" She was not only a brilliant but a clever and shrewd woman as well. In every town that she went to, wherever she spoke, she never failed to name C. C. Duane as the man of the hour. This met Mrs. Duane's views precisely—in fact it was exactly what she wished. In less than six weeks Marjie's own name had dropped

from public usage and the name of her husband was the one associated in the people's minds with the new movement.

This fact was the motive for her personally attending to the Elliott correspondence. She had embarked in everything for Billy's sake, for Billy's furtherance and good and glory.

As she held the paper from the Ohio town in her hand, with its not bad likeness of Eva Elliott turned out, she remembered with what high and splendid hopes, with what courage and assurance and secret joy she had started to help him—and now? Where was she drifting to? No, she was not drifting, she was being hurried, raced, whirled into—she dared not think what. And Billy? And Fatima? Yes, Billy had loved Fatima first, and last; that was all there was to it. Why had he sought her and married her when his heart was in another place? Well, men wanted to have wives; women in their own class to preside over their homes, be mothers to their children, make the show of conventional respectability to the world with. And she stood for this to Billy!

She would not, could not do that. There must come an end to it. Not yet—not yet!

She must have time to collect herself, time to realize and plan a little and to gather strength to speak to her husband about it. It should be a quiet talk—no tears, no scene, no remonstrance or reproach. People could not teach their hearts.

It was cruel to have married her so—but it was the way of the world—her own world, too.

All this was what Marjorie said to herself very calmly and bravely and concisely while the sun shone—while she recalled that Isidoro De Barreaux's very life was hers. But when the darkness came creeping along, when the twilight set in and the hour reached for the daily, usual home-coming of the master of the house, then—she

faltered and wept and sobbed and her soul was riven and she forgot the Hebrew entirely.

It was just nearing six now, when she heard someone come up the stairs—a man's tread. Billy's! could it be? and Billy never came in any more until she was at dinner, if not much later. No; it was not Billy, it was Dan Satterlee.

She was glad of him—glad of anybody, anything to take her mind out of its pain for ever so little a while.

"Marjie!" he exclaimed, throwing himself down on the lounge as a brother might—indeed, these two had grown up together in a measure—"I've come to tell you something!"

"A secret, Dan?" she asks, laughing, and with the sweet hope that always lies uppermost with a good woman, that a young man's or woman's secret shall be of love. "Tell me all about her!" she adds, leaning toward him and so the paper with Eva Elliott's picture in it falls over from her lap on Dan's knees.

He caught it up, and, pointing to the portrait in a kind of forlorn, desperate way, he said:

"It's that."

"That?" she echoes, with a start. "Why, Dan, what do you mean? that is Eva Elliott—the octoroon!"

"Hush-h," he pleads, putting his hand over her mouth. "Don't speak the word—it'll kill me. The fact is enough."

"Dan!" she says softly, "not really?"

He nods.

"Does she know it?"

"No, no!"

"Just think, Dan, dear," Marjie says.

"I have thought until I'm nearly deaf, dumb and blind." He springs up and begins to pace the floor. "Now Marjie, you're the cleverest and the best and the truest woman I know—you tell me what to do, tell me what is best."

"For yourself or for her?" she asks, seeking to gain time to grasp the intricacies of this strange thing; this anomaly of race and blood when a young man and a young woman, each with education, accomplishments, refinements, civilization, opportunity, beauty, health, and ambition love each other and yet are set apart by the awful sin of the forefathers. And if set apart, is the barrier one that may or may not be pushed away, ignored, lived down? Should she tell him that Eva cared for him? No; that would be to betray a sacred trust, and no doubt, too, render his difficulties the greater.

"Wouldn't what would be best for me be best for her?" he asks, in surprise.

"Perhaps, Dan," Mrs. Duane says with a smile, "it may be—as you men never seem to think possible—she might not like you!"

"I could soon make her!" he cries impetuously. "Oh Marjie, I love her very, very dearly. What to do! what to do!"

"Dan," she says after a few minutes' pause, walking up and down with him, "you must try to look at it this way. If you are willing to give up your country, your people, your friends, career, ambitions, everything here and go away to France; or no, it would have to be further—India, Egypt—and make Eva your wife where either her history was not known or where, if known, no particular prejudice exists; if, say, you can do this and never return here, and if you can persuade her to go with you, then your love outrides everything else; but, take care!"

"I've struggled and fought against it to no purpose. If I were some fellows I suppose I'd have—I don't know what! But I tell you, Marjie, I want to make that girl," he touches the paper in his other hand, "my wife, blood or no blood, black or blue!"

Marjie hesitated. It seemed to her that she was cheating Eva Elliott of her birthright, standing between the

octoroon and the most dear and precious thing in the world to any woman—the love of the man she loved. She felt positively guilty toward her. And yet the horror of it—the revulsion and anguish that must come of it to both of them. If Eva could only have the fleeting joy of knowing that Dan loved her. Why should she not?

“Dan,” Marjie says, crossing to her writing-table and glancing over some letters. “She will be in Hunterdon, Ohio, next Sunday. Go there and tell her.”

“Yes,” he said, “I will. Oh, Marjie, you do know what’s best!” He wrung her hand.

“Not I, Dan, dear, but Eva Elliott will know.” Marjie was sure of that.

CHAPTER XLI

What It Costs To Free A Murderer

THE Mayor had signed the bill for the appropriation for the city's asphalt plant. He had not detected the McGuire faction in it, and even had he he would not have thought it too large, for it was not excessive, including, as he presumed it to, a plant sufficiently extensive to serve the uses of both New York and Brooklyn Boroughs.

This was by no means the plan of the men at the helm, McGuire, the Parleys, and Schroeder, of course, acting under cover of their supposed opponents in the Board, a "deal" having been made to insure the Mayor's approval.

Billy was not quite up to his normal mark those days. He found he could not divide himself at will and leave his home life at the Madison Avenue house in the morning to lead solely and wholly his public life while absent from that house. Marjorie followed him wherever he went. Her face looked up at him from all the bills and appropriations, vetoes, messages, and petitions. It was useless to deny that he was unfit for his work and that the one woman in the world for him was rendering him a cipher in all the things of this life that did not concern her personally.

He was annoyed at his failure, annoyed at his absorption; and yet at moments he longed to throw himself down at her feet and tell her how she was the round world and the high heaven, and that lacking her the whole of everything else was worthless.

He sat in his office and vainly tried to argue the

matter out with himself. Where were they drifting to—he and his wife? One word stared him in the face—stared so uncompromisingly and absolutely that the pen he held unconsciously scrawled it over the sheet of paper lying on the desk before him.

Divorce. Yes, that was it. It should not be! It must—did he wish to hold her against her will, when her heart was another's?—certainly he did not.

He tore the paper to bits. He sprang up and looked at the clock. There was no necessity for his stopping down town any longer. He went up to the stable, got a mount and rode out into Westchester as hard and as fast as he could. Billy was one of the men who always sought the balm of the brown earth for all his ills, the physic of violent exercise, the tonic of straining muscles and taut tendons.

Shortly before the signing of the asphalt bill, Isaac Schroeder had been removed from the prison at New Bremen, on a change of venue, to Rochester. Not many days after the signing of this bill, he was again ordered removed from Rochester jail on another change of venue. It was said that he was being taken to Buffalo. He was taken away at nightfall. The Judge who had granted the last order was present at the prison when the man, held on the charge of murder, was led out of his cell and passed along the corridor and yard to the gates.

Schroeder had a heavy beard and his hair was long; all the photographs taken of him for the papers—and these had been innumerable, keeping him constantly before the public eye—had been made when he was first captured, when his face was innocent of a hair. If these pictures had been placed beside Isaac Schroeder now, not one person in a thousand, possibly, would have considered that these pictures were meant for this man.

He got into a cab with two officers at the gates of the Buffalo prison; he was chained to one of them and he wore the prison garb. He seemed sulky and irritable,

fractious and unruly so long as he was in sight of the warders, although he had smiled and nodded to that Judge who had granted him the second change of venue. These changes of venue never reached the public ear through the medium of the press.

When the cab had gone about the streets of Buffalo for about a half an hour with the silk curtains discreetly drawn down, Max Schroeder, who was on this occasion officiating as driver, pulled up at the railway station in pretty fair form, considering that he had never driven a cab before in his life.

He was trembling from head to foot. His eyelids blinked nervously, his fingers twitched; he jumped down from the box and laid his hand on the knob of the cab door. A firmer touch held it closed from the inside.

The father stooped his head, and thrust his hand into his trousers' pocket, grasping a roll of bills; he had pulled up a little, out of the glare of the electrics, a little off the thoroughfare of the rush of travel. One of the three occupants of the vehicle rolled up the curtain with a snap and lowered the window.

Isaac Schroeder still sat on the back seat, but now clad in a neat, gray business suit, his linen fair and white, his fob hung from its place; he carried a pair of good gloves and a silk umbrella and wore eye-glasses. Beside him sat one man, opposite to him sat the other. The feet of the two officials were on the prisoner's feet, each of them had his right hand on the pistol in his hip-pocket but no handcuffs were to be seen; nothing but the valise which had been in the cab when the two men first entered it to go to the Buffalo prison.

"Here's your fare, cabby," says the man sitting opposite to the prisoner, as he tendered a two-dollar bill to Max Schroeder.

"And here's der change," returned the cab-driver, as he took the greenback and handed the official the roll of bills. They were quite in a dark corner, so the man

beside the prisoner struck a match, and he watched while the man opposite counted the bills in Max Schroeder's roll.

There were five one thousand dollar bills! Both men were entirely satisfied of that fact. Then they moved their feet and let go their hip-pockets and Isaac Schroeder sprang out of the cab.

No one of the four men spoke a single word. Max Schroeder leaned in and took the valise. One of the officials mounted the box and drove the cab back to its owner; the other one walked home.

Max Schroeder walked away into the station with the valise and bought a ticket for a small town, farther west. Isaac Schroeder bought a ticket for New York. Thus the incident closed.

No one ever heard that he was out of jail; no one ever knew why he never came to trial; no one ever troubled themselves in the least about him. In less than four weeks, under the name of George Isaacs, he had a position on the police force of New York, in the detective branch of the service, and from the start he proved himself a man of marked sagacity, coolness, expediency. He was attached to Captain Chapman's precinct and at once won the confidence, esteem and admiration of his chief.

The asphalt plant which the great city of New York ought to own did not seem to materialize, but Isaac Schroeder was a free man. It had cost his father, or the city—just whichever way one happened to look at it—exactly one hundred and fifty thousand dollars to do it.

CHAPTER XLII

Marjorie Goes to Nova Scotia

WHILE George Isaacs by no means neglected the business of the municipality he was supposed to be serving, he kept a sharp lookout on one person. That was Mrs. C. C. Duane. Captain Chapman had told him almost immediately that the new Mayor was pledged to stamp out the gambling dens of the city, and in Isaacs, Chapman believed he had found a man capable of not only following his Captain's lead, but of initiating a system of detection and capture along this line of crime which would show the best results.

Isaacs had been set by the Captain on one or two rather sinuous trails, as a starter, to see what he could do, and the end had justified much more than the Captain's expectations. The new man showed a cunning and patience at devising methods, and a boldness and courage in carrying them out, which were sure factors in the campaign to be shortly pushed against the gambling houses of New York.

Isaacs knew that Marjorie had been to O'Leary's room on the second floor. He knew how much she had won and lost; he knew that Isidoro de Barreaux met her there, he saw them leave the place together. Every moment unemployed by his duties this man spent in shadowing Marjorie Duane. He had not, so far, penetrated her own home. He was compelled to leave her there. He had not been in town when she had gone to Nova Scotia, else he would probably have made some sort of an errand for himself to go on there too.

Marjorie had ostensibly gone down to the Westbury

place, but in reality she had taken a train for Poughkeepsie. When she got out for some luncheon, she was met there by a Syrian man who handed Maro over to her keeping. She had bought the boy an outfit and sent it to Washington Street. He was now dressed as American children are, and in these clothes, with his hair allowed to grow, his resemblance to Billy was even more striking than before. She had sent a trunk full of things to Nova Scotia for him and she now took him aboard the train and resumed the journey.

It was a strange journey. Marjorie Duane could never forget it if she should live a hundred years or more. The child was as affectionate and demonstrative and incontinent as he was mischievous and unruly. He wished to hold her hands and play with her rings; he wanted to lay his head upon her lap, her shoulder, to kiss and stroke her face. Yes; it was a painful and strange journey, and hovering over it all was the sense of a shameful secrecy and the necessity for subterfuge, and the wild, impotent crying of an outraged heart and soul!

She took him to the school which was twelve miles from Digby, and the principal's name was Dr. Ireneus Hatley, a very amiable, positive, mild, non-inquisitive, visionary gentleman, who had begun life taking everything and everybody on faith, and had presently discovered that, while faith was the only factor of much account in the coming world, it was no sort of a reliance in this one at all—so far as one's fellow inhabitants are concerned, that is to say.

The school was, however, a fine one; the influences of the best; it was far, far removed from New York or its people; Dr. Hatley had never been in the States. Maro was as content with his new friends as he had been with her. She left him in good hands. Billy's boy was safe for a term of years at least and in the way of being made a decent man.

She came home with a sense of having accomplished a duty, which is not infrequently one of the most forlorn sensations imaginable. The thing had to be done; there was no one to do it. The child was there to be made a man of and she, the wife of the child's father, seemed the only person on earth ready at hand to do the duty. She had done it. The very evening after she reached home, she remembered something else that she should do: that was to give her husband the letter that Michael McGuire had written to her. She recollected it just as she came in one afternoon late from O'Leary's, where she had been playing high and losing at bridge.

For Hochstein had been correct—Mrs. Duane had come.

Just as she crossed over to take the letter from the safe, by a curious coincidence, George Isaacs happened to be lurking about the corner watching the house; he had seen her go in. He now expected to see De Barreaux follow suit.

Marjorie suddenly felt that Billy might need that letter some time, and ought to have it. She gave it to him that night. He thanked her, as he took it. Then he read it and started over impulsively toward her, and took up her hand and was lifting it to his lips when she broke away from him, an angry flash in her eyes, her cheeks ablaze.

"Well?" he said, a bit lamely, for he was a very proud man.

"Don't!" she cried, "don't do that!"

"Why not?" he tried to smile.

"You know!" she says vehemently, "you must know—and so do I!" And then she ran away upstairs, leaving him to suppose that of course it was because she no longer cared for him, but the rather for another.

Billy crossed to the telephone and rang up Captain Chapman and told him to come over to the house, if pos-

sible. He meant to throw himself now, body, brain, heart, and soul into the reforms he was planning.

Love? it was a dream. Home? a delusion. Woman? Marjorie? He took up the whiskey carafe, poured a glass full and drank it.

Yes, Chapman and the gambling dens. Work! Work! Any kind of work! The bell sounded and the Captain was ushered in.

CHAPTER XLIII

Eva's Letter and Dolly's Paragon

DAN SATTERLEE got back from Ohio a couple of days after he went out there. The same train that brought him fetched Marjorie a letter from Eva Elliott. It ran this way:

"Mrs. C. C. Duane,

"Dear Madam: Mr. Satterlee has just left me. He told me of your suggesting to him to come and see me. I want to thank you from my very soul for having been instrumental in giving me the greatest, most magnificent happiness that a woman ever had in life—the having been told, by the man she loves, that he loves her. Oh, if you only knew what new faith, new hopes and beliefs and strength it has given me! how the earth and all the people in it seem better, kinder, nobler; how all things are more possible, easier; the burden of my black blood, of my ostracism, my loneliness—all, are not so hard to bear. How, although I am a person of no race, neither black nor white, a person whom none will claim and at whom the blacks scoff and the whites shake their heads, I still am no longer sorry that I was born. Of course you knew, dear Madam, what my answer to Mr. Satterlee would be. I love him too much to handicap him in any way, setting aside the unbearable burden that an off-color wife would be to any white man. In my very disability I can discover a solace: it is that I can suffer and resign and abstain for his most dear sake. He does not see it this way just yet. I am proud that he does not, but he will. I shall watch his career with unspeakable interest. I shall some day hear of his marriage to one of his own class.

"As for me, if you still feel that you can find time to men-

tion me to those artist friends of yours in Paris, I shall now be glad to go over there and study. I have a little money saved and I shall work earnestly and may, after a time, amount to something. My greatest ambition is to paint a portrait of my father—he is one of the most brilliant lawyers the state of Virginia ever had. I have seen him many times; I can paint it from memory. I want to give it to the city of Richmond anonymously—I would not offend the white people by doing otherwise. But I want to feel that it is there, in the public building, made and given by me. May I thank you, dear Madam, for all you have been to me and subscribe myself,

“Yours faithfully,

“EVA ELLIOTT.”

Marjorie said to herself, “My way was the best way. I am glad.”

Dan, meantime, in the desperate, perturbed mood inseparable from the outcome of his trip, threw himself with an even accelerated ardor into Billy's plans. Both chief and private secretary were running an identical race: of head against heart, which is always on the programme and never quite won or quite lost either way, so long as a well-balanced man is in the saddle.

As Dan went up the stoop of the Madison Avenue house, the cloudy morning after his return from Hunterdon, Ohio, he met Dolly Propper and Lord Seaborough coming out. Dolly told him she had been sent up by her mother with a message to Mrs. Duane to be “at O’Leary’s next Thursday night without fail.”

Seaborough had joined Dolly on the avenue. He had not seen her in a week and he was very much aggrieved over his ill-luck.

“It’s going to rain,” remarked Dolly, unbuttoning her umbrella-case.

He takes it from her and puts it up as the drops begin to fall slowly.

“You reign over me like a Turk!” he says savagely,

helping her down the steps and coming very close so that the blue umbrella may protect both their hats, at least.

"Comparing me to that horrid, common, domestic, barn-yard bird! Turkey!" cried she irately.

"I didn't!" says the young man, "I compared you to the greatest monarch in the known world. Ah, Dolly!"

"Miss, if you please," says the Child.

"Hit, if you please," retorts the Earl.

"Suppose I don't 'please'?" inquires she.

"You can't help pleasing," says he. "So long as you live you must do that."

"Seaborough, do you really think I'm nice?" inquires Dolly, as they stroll along in the pelting rain.

"Jove!" exclaims his Lordship, losing his monocle in the enthusiasm of his emotions. "I think you're the sweetest, prettiest, loveliest, dearest, best, truest little girl that was ever created!"

The umbrella is small and the drops from its tips are falling on his Lordship's nose and hat-brim, and trickling thence upon his coat. Dolly looked up at her lover and began to laugh.

"I say," he goes on, "you're perfect, you're a paragon, a——"

"I'm under a paragon any way!" she interrupts, twitching the umbrella a little more to the left and thus protecting his Lordship's handsome nose from further shower-baths.

"You're the most brilliant, witty, clever! oh, Dolly! won't you accept me?"

"I never accept presents from men," remarks she, with a little laugh.

"Why do you always put me off when I ask you?" he cries in indignation.

"I never took you on so I can't be said to put you off. I never gave you any encouragement," she says, somewhat seriously.

"You've never given me anything at all in that line, I'll admit. But I'll be——"

"Well, what?" inquires she, almost standing still on the pavement, her eyes dancing with amusement.

"Hung!" he answers, "but I'll get a yes or a no from you this blessed day. Dolly, will you be my wife?"

"No money to buy you with, even if I wanted you!" she replies.

"Money!" echoes the Earl. "Oh, come now, I'm not over here with a title for sale. Seaborough's not in the market. All the houses are in good repair; Seaforth Lodge in Scotland where we'll go each year for the shooting; Seaborough Castle in Herts; Seaborough House in London; the Manor-House in Kent, and Sea-Holme, the place in Wales. Darling little girl," he whispers, while the rain beats and the wind blows all about them, "I'm asking you to be my wife, not my banker. Please?"

"My father," poor Dolly shakes her young blond head ruefully.

"Very jolly chap—beg pardon! I mean—I would say——" stumbles his Lordship, casting about in his brain for some adequate indorsement of Dolly's paternal relative.

"Yes, he is that," Dolly responds, "but then he's a divorcé, you know, and he is married to Mrs. Townsend."

"Quite so," replies the Earl, with becoming sobriety.

"And I would not marry anyone in this world who would object to papa's coming to see me if he wanted to," the little maid says bravely.

"Bless my soul!" returns her suitor. "He shall come and stop with us for years if you wish."

Dolly smiles, then frowns again as she proceeds.

"There is mama——"

"To be sure!" carols his Lordship, with a joyous demeanor.

"I would not marry anyone who—who objected to mama, or who would not like her to visit me."

"I should be only too happy," he exclaims.

"But mama will soon, very soon now, be divorced too! and then she will marry Mr. Stowe."

"Certainly," assents the Earl cheerfully.

"Mr. Stowe was divorced from his wife, you know, and papa's present wife ran away from her first husband. They're quite a bad lot!" the Child says, glancing sideways and with a blush at her companion. "It would not be an 'International alliance' of much social advantage to the transatlantic member," she adds, a little bitterly, "but all the same, I could never give up either my father or my mother for anyone!"

"God bless you!" says the young fellow warmly. "Do you know I think I love you the more for your loyalty to them."

There are tears in her eyes now. An awful gust of wind came screeching around the corner of Fifteenth Street and Irving Place; the rain poured down in a torrent; Seaborough held the little blue umbrella close over their two heads—very, very close; he put his arm audaciously around Dolly; he kissed Dolly's cheek.

Dolly sighed. They both stood still. No one was to be seen in the street—there may have been people at the windows. Neither of them knew or thought.

"Dolly sweetheart, it's 'yes,' isn't it?"

"Men know best about most things," she replies.

In his ecstasy of delight he managed, even though holding the umbrella in safe leash, to slip his big seal ring from his own finger and put it on hers.

"My little wife, my little Countess of Seaborough," he whispers, "I want you to wear that until I can go over to Tiffany's and fetch you the prettiest stones he's got."

Dolly laughed. A bigger gust turned the blue umbrella wrong side out just as his Lordship was imprinting

a chaste salute upon her hand. They ran for it now, hand-in-hand, and presently reached the apartment where the Proppers lived.

"Too bad," she said, "that the paragon turned its back on you after all."

"It didn't," laughed he. "It only showed me its silver lining!" The blue umbrella was of a changeable silk which showed white on the wrong side.

They went in together.

CHAPTER XLIV

The Planning of the Raid

"YOUR HONOR," said Captain Chapman, toward the close of his conference with the Mayor, "there's one thing I am in duty bound to tell you before this matter is let loose." Duane inclined his head.

"That is, that the people in your own class—the rich, the best, the most reputable people we have—are in it as deep as the Tenderloin toughs and it'll go pretty hard with some of your own friends, maybe?"

Duane said nothing, he merely inclined his head again. The Captain looked at him; he had not the remotest idea that Mrs. Duane gambled but he did know that she employed O'Leary as a dressmaker. In fact, he had questioned Isaacs as to the personality of the patrons of the second story of the house without a staircase pretty closely; Isaacs told him that Mrs. Duane was never there—probably knew nothing of its existence—but had named to him most of the other women and men who frequented the place. Of course, if Captain Chapman had had an inkling even that Mrs. Duane ever went to O'Leary's gambling room, he would have put a stop at once to the raid. This would not have tallied with Isaacs' plans.

"Some of the ladies, your Honor," resumes the Captain, "who play at some of these fashionable plants where dressmakers and milliners are to the front, and roulette and faro at the back or upstairs, are—pardon me—friends of Mrs. Duane's."

Billy bit in his lip; his face was stern.

"Chapman," he said, moving back a trifle in his

swing-chair, at which the subordinate rose, "it makes no difference whether the women whom you will arrest next Thursday night are rich or poor, well-born or the reverse, of position or without—go ahead. I am determined that this mad craze for play, which has invaded and captured people of all classes, shall be put a stop to wherever the law can do it. I can't send you into my neighbor's wife's drawing-room of an afternoon and have you arrest her and her guests. I can't detail your men to break into my friend's house across the street and carry his young daughters and their companions off to the station-house because they are having a bridge-class, because their eyes are bright with the gambler's glitter, and their hands out for all they can rake in; because they're fired up with punch, and because their own mothers hire an expert to instruct them how to win; I can't do these things, but I can, and I do, order you to close up as many of these secret semi-public places as you can, without regard for either their proprietors or their frequenters. Bah!" he exclaims, rising, "when there's a rotten spot in the fruit, cut it out. If the mothers of girls are pointing them the path to gambling, arrest the girls, show them the inside of a prison-cell, just as if they were not the children of the rich, and possibly that tonic may help to cure."

The Captain took his leave. George Isaacs was waiting for him at the door with a cab. The chief entered it, the detective jumped in after him.

"By jingo!" cries the Captain. "The Mayor is a brick! Well, what's the news?"

"Nothing of any particular importance, only I have discovered that the attack on the O'Leary game is going to be rather more difficult than I had at first expected; and it's the biggest game of a private nature in the whole city," is Isaacs' reply.

"Where does the new difficulty come in?" asks the Captain. "I'll give you all the men you want. I'll be there myself if you want me," he adds.

"Keep the most of the men for the tough places," Isaacs answers. "Remember, Captain, we're raiding fifteen houses next Thursday night. I should recommend you to be at Dooley's in Thirteenth Street, if you'll allow me to advise."

"That's what I have you for," laughs Chapman, "to advise. Gad! you're hard to beat at a scheme, and a way to carry it out."

"What I want is just six men," Isaacs says, bowing. "Let me pick them myself, please; let me lead the jump and I'll bet my head I'll fetch you in as handsome a lot of ladies and gentlemen as you ever set eyes on!"

"Take your own way. I've had my attention on the O'Leary woman for several years, but nothing could be done with her so long as Mike McGuire was a power. You know she's his wife's cousin," says the Captain.

"She is still his wife's cousin," remarks the detective laconically, "and McGuire is still a power. How do you make out we're a-going to shut her down on Thursday night?"

"I'm half afraid we won't," returns Chapman, "that it'll slip up. Somebody'll leak—give us away for a double X."

"Nope," returns the younger man, "no living soul but you and me knows it. If you're selling yourself for twenty dollars, I'll buy you." He laughs, and continues:

"I'm not naming my six men until the hour I want them. No—it won't slip up. You see the great trouble with all you men on the whole force is talk, gabble, chatter; excuse me, Captain, but how can you expect to land any criminal by a Monday night, say, when on Monday morning you're out in the newspapers explaining to them how and when and where you're going to do the job?"

"That's so" is the thoughtful answer.

"If the police could learn to keep their mouths shut

there'd be a darned sight less crime in New York City," exclaims Isaacs.

"You're right" is the reply.

"But you'll never do it," remarks Mr. George Isaacs, "so long as there's a reporter left with a dollar in his pocket."

"You're hard on the force," says Chapman.

"I'm one of 'em," is the quick response. "A dollar's a dollar every day in the week to us, and each man's sure the next one'll get the dollar if he doesn't, just as each reporter's bound to have the stuff if money can buy it. No, sir; I tell you if you had a deaf-mute force you might win out, or a few fellows like me who know how to hold their tongues—and—hold them!"

"Pick your own men, Isaacs," says the Captain, as they both alight at the precinct house. "I expect to be proud of you and them."

George Isaacs bowed, turned down to Twenty-ninth Street and boarded a car for the east side. When he reached Third Avenue he got off and went into the Slogan Club and met his father.

They had one of the five private rooms that made the building "a hotel." They had not met since the night that Max Schroeder had driven the Buffalo cab and gone away West, returning to New York, by a circuitous route, a few days later on.

"How's mother?" asked the son, in a low tone, after he had closed the door and sat down.

"Vell. My son! my son!" the father takes the young man's head between his hands and strokes his face and hair and beard.

Isaac Schroeder sighed. "That's good," he says, "and the girls?"

"Leah is vell und Rosie, but little Rebecca, she ails. Isaac, you're vonderful! my poy, you're vonderful!" He stands off and looks at him,

"Hush-h."

"Yes, yes, I vill."

"Father, you can stick him on Thursday night next."

"As soon as dot?" inquires Max.

The son nods. "I got it down fine. His wife's gambling high at O'Leary's most every night. She's to be there for sure on Thursday—she and a lot of her pals. I'll grab 'em all. I'll haul his wife off to the cells in company with the girls from the cheap dens on the side streets, I will! She'll scream and cry and beg for mercy, but I'll do my duty!" He laughed under his breath.

Max Schroeder regarded his son with a strange interest. There was something other and stranger than his own mean, crawling purpose of getting even with Duane surging and swelling beneath Isaac's speech. Indeed, the speech was dull, heavy, dogged, in curious dissonance with the fiendish laughter and the blaze in his large, black eyes.

"I say, Ikey," Max finally whispers, "what haf you got against him more dan dat New Premen affair?"

"Isn't that enough?" inquires the son.

"Vell, yes, but you got der pest of him. Dot makes it sqvare, don't it, eh?"

"No, it don't," replies the son. "I hate him with every drop of blood in my veins. I hate him because he's rich and handsome and successful and honorable and honest and respected and on top!" He speaks with an energy that bursts like flame from every syllable of utterance.

"Ah-h," sneers the other, "you'll be on dop T'ursday night, yourself."

"Just for a moment or two, that's all," is the son's hopeless reply. "Father, see here," he continues. "You'd better know it first as well as last. I'm in with the Socialist gang."

Max Schroeder now regarded his son with a species of adoration, a reverence and a humility at once peculiar and touching.

"So!" he exclaims, sitting down by the deal table and clasping his fingers together. "I would haf been too, my poy, but I hadn't der gourage. You got it," he said triumphantly. Isaac nods. "I hate 'em," continues Max Schroeder, "mit all my soul! hate 'em mit deir superior education und manners und gustoms und money und yachts und racers und exglusiveness und penevolence und honesty und der rest of it! I hate 'em joost as much as you do." The hands of the two men met and clasped firmly, then fell asunder.

"But," Max proceeds, "I tell you I'm afraid of 'em—you ain't."

"No. Would I have shot at Duane to kill, out there in New Bremen, if I had been? Ah! We're going to kill the whole kit and crew of 'em, every living millionaire in the city of New York! There's no other way. It's fate! It's justice! They're grinding the poor man into the dust; he turns and stings their heels." His aspect is at once impressive and pathetic.

"Take care," whispers the father.

"What of?" exclaims the son. "Each one of us is pledged to do his work; each one of us knows the result if he's caught doing it. We count the cost before we enter the lists."

"You ain't a-goin' ter kill Duane!" gasps Max Schroeder.

"When I get the chance, yes."

Then he laughed and invited his father to drink something.

"I'll tell you," he says, after they have swallowed the liquor; "on Thursday night, you be watching near O'Leary's and when I tip you the signal from the second story window—I'll wave a handkerchief as soon as I bag my game and get her in the officers' hands; ah, I'll pay her up for her treatment of you with McGuire's letter!—you drive over here, McGuire's sure to be here, and tell him what's happened; then go straight down.

to Duane's house and tell him where his wife is and make the deal with him for a pot to keep it out of the papers. See?" He winks shrewdly up at his parent.

The older man nodded greedily.

"We're needin' money, Ikey. It took every cent to get you out of—up dere, you know—" he jerks his supple thumb backward.

"I know, and that's what I'm going to have McGuire play Duane for—fifty thousand! But the officers'll be a holdin' fast of my lady until her husband ponies up!"

"How she looked at me," murmurs Max, "like a qveen ven she got der pest of me mit dot letter."

"Queen—of clubs!" laughs the son.

"I say, Duane's game, subbosin' he von't listen to no brobositions from McGuire?" asks Max. "Vot den, eh?"

"Go to him yourself."

"Vot'll I gif him, Ikey?"

"Hell," is the son's answer. "Tell him his wife's riding to the West Thirtieth Street station in a wagon with the girls from the streets and'll be shut up to sleep with 'em in the same cell. Tell him she's running away with the Pole, De Barreaux. Tell him anything; wring the money out of him and stop him from pushing the inquiry about the asphalt appropriation." He enunciates the last sentence with painful distinctness and point.

"Has he scented dot out?" gasps Max Schroeder beginning to pace up and down and rub his hands.

"Yes. He's investigating it now with two of the best of the Secret-Service men."

"Does he suspect?" asks the father, trembling.

"He's been wiring to New Bremen and Buffalo and Rochester in cipher for three days," is the son's reply.

"Ikey, my poy, get away mit yourself, go apoard a steamer today. I'm peggin' you, Ikey. My poy, I can't live und see you cornered again. Go! go!"

Isaac Schroeder shook his head.

"Father, I wouldn't go for anything. By twelve o'clock Thursday night we'll hold the Mayor of New York and his handsome, clever, aristocratic wife in between our fingers and thumbs. And they'll pay to get out and they'll keep quiet, no fear."

"Ikey, you're a great man," said the father, surveying the young one proudly. "But I ain't. I'll do as you tell me to."

CHAPTER XLV

Mrs. Propper Gets Her Divorce

MRS. PROPPER had gotten her divorce.

Fifteen minutes after the papers were put into her hands she and Jack Stowe drove over to the Bishop's on Chelsea Square, and were married then and there. They went immediately down to Mr. Stowe's Westbury place and returned to town three days later, going to the Waldorf.

Imogene and Dick had told Mrs. Propper of their marriage; the play was now secured by Charles Frohman for America and France, Miss Marbury had transacted the business.

Mrs. Propper surveyed her elder daughter and her son-in-law.

"Well," she said, "I suppose it's better to be married to a play-author than not to be married at all," and she kissed Imogene and let Dickey kiss her.

Seaborough had obtained her consent to his engagement to Dolly—no difficult matter. She was radiant over the alliance and to parade it was one of the chief reasons that she sliced the honeymoon up so early in its existence and haled the slightly reluctant bridegroom up to town.

Tuesday night Marjorie Duane was entertaining the Bi-Monthly: Mrs. Loring would be there. Probably Mr. Propper and Mrs. Propper also. Seaborough would be there: Dolly should go. Honeymoons could be duplicated, but the triple acquisition of a son-in-law who was somewhat famous already, a husband who was many times a millionaire, and a fiancé for Dolly who was the richest

Earl in England combined to create a situation not likely to be repeated and worth too much as a social factor to be ignored while one stopped in the country.

Town was the place, decidedly; and there was O'Leary's on Thursday night. She was introducing Seaborough and she could risk as much as she liked at last on roulette.

Jack Stowe was of the opinion that whatever she did was right. He was a man who was addicted to fine perfumes, hair tonics, flower baths, bracelets, and who didn't care a continental whether a woman dyed her hair, rouged her cheeks or painted her eyebrows. He was jovial and well-mannered and could drive four horses, ride one, steer a bubble or a boat, play golf, polo, cards, with acumen and pretty even success. Jack Stowe, once at the Waldorf, didn't mind the exchange of jars in which his honey was kept.

The day after the marriage all the newspapers in the United States gave a more or less picturesque and flamboyant account of the ceremony. The majority of those of the best class scored the Bishop heavily for marrying two people who were divorced, anyway, and above all things when one of them had only obtained such legal freedom half an hour before she resigned it.

Dan Satterlee, Tommy Eckford, Lord Seaborough, and Billy, at whose house they were dining, were in the library scanning some of these papers and making their several comments, when a step in the hall made the host glance up quickly.

"There's the old man now, boys!" he exclaimed. "Hide these papers. I didn't know he was due to-night—Marjie did not tell me."

The Bishop came in, both hands out, his keen eyes taking in the friendly scramble to get the papers under the table, behind the safe, and so forth; taking in the loving care that would have saved him from seeing anything that could hurt.

"Glad to see you, sir!" cries Billy warmly.

"Boys! boys!" says the Churchman. "Don't hide the papers. I've read them all—all the New York papers at least. I hear the others are about the same."

"About the same, sir," says Tommy, while Seaborough leaned over to poke the fire and Dan bent his eyes on a picture.

"A lot of rot!" exclaims Billy, helping the Bishop off with his coat himself and pushing a big chair up to the hearth. It wanted a half hour yet of the time when the women would show up in the drawing-room.

"The American newspaper is a disgrace to civilization," continues Duane; "it's vile, uncompromisingly vile, and always ready to print any infernal stuff it can, about anybody!"

"Tut, tut, tut!" cries the guest. "Billy, the American newspaper is the greatest thing on earth. You're mistaken in your estimate."

"Bishop King, you are charitable," smiles Seaborough.

"No need for charity," is the reply. "The press scores me and, from the press's standpoint, that is the thing to do. If I can't stand up under it then I must fall down."

All the four men wondered if Gordon King could stand up under it and what his attitude really was below the surface of his expressed action in marrying Jack Stowe and Mrs. Propper. Billy whistled a bar and then squaring around to the churchman, whom he was very fond of, he asked bluntly:

"Bishop, why did you do it?"

"Because I thought it was right to do it," was the prompt answer.

"So soon?" mutters Tommy.

"If it is right to do it at all," says the old man, "it was right to do it as soon as the contracting parties wished it done."

"Then," says Billy Duane, looking at his wife's uncle steadily, "you believe in divorce, Uncle Gordon?"

"Yes, I believe in divorce." It was said with deliberation, reserve, and an infinite dignity, with love, benevolence, and as if after long preparation and study.

The Bishop realized that in answering Duane's question—correctly speaking, answering the same question put by all four of the men in the room—he was answering it, too, for the world at large, in so far as that world should be interested in hearing his belief upon the subject. He had indeed read the papers, wherein he was called "a time-server, the priest of the aristocrats, a trimmer, a fair-weather prelate, the churchman of the rich, the priest who was a money-lover, the luxurious Bishop King, the promoter of sin, the encourager of the disbandment of the home, the man who helped to make children fatherless and motherless, the divine who gave a blessing upon desecrated ties, the minister who was shameless in his pandering to the disgraceful, illicit unions of the wealthy." All this and much more Gordon King had read about himself; and even in the depths of his own mind he had no blame for the men who had so written of him. With a wonderful and rare power of seeing from the other man's point of view, he combined a generous charity and a marvellous patience. He honored and respected the press that had the courage and the vim to attack where they believed attack should be made; many of the men who edited these papers and who had written these articles were friends and acquaintances of his. He knew that they had printed what they had because they thought he was in the wrong, shamefully in the wrong, and so thinking he held they were right to say so.

Perhaps he was wrong. He had taken his stand; if he should learn later that he was wrong he would retract and reform it altogether. But he believed he was right; for the rest, he was content to wait—no matter how long.

All the friends he had might pass by on the other side if they thought best, Gordon King was a man to bide his time, head up, for the result; not in pride and vain-glory, but in humility and steadfast courage.

"You do!" Billy Duane gasps, while the other three stared and drew in their breath.

"Boys," said the Bishop, "years ago I came to New York to study for the ministry at the Theological Seminary over in West Twentieth Street. I was poor; I went, as hundreds of thousands of young fellows do now, every year, into a boarding-house just along there in Twenty-first Street somewhere. I had a hall bedroom on the third floor. I was an observing chap and everything in the town life and about the town people that came under my notice was pretty thoroughly sifted mentally. I used to see the people come up from meals. Into the back parlor went a man and his wife; into the back room, second floor, and into the front room, second floor, each, went a man and his wife; the same thing was in process on the third floor and also on the fourth, the hall rooms being occupied by single men, like myself. During the years that I was a student I lived in a number of boarding-houses. While I was a deacon and attached to Doctor Seabury's church in West Fourteenth Street, I visited an incalculable number of boarding-houses in making the round of parochial calls within my duty; as a priest and assistant at the church in Chicago where I first went, in the church in Boston which was my first charge, I was admitted to more and more and more boarding-houses, and in every one of them I found family life reduced to this horrible, devastating existence of man and wife—sometimes with a little child—shut up to lead their lives together in one room. Gentlemen!" said Gordon King, rising and lifting his fine white hands, "every prisoner in our jails is given a cell *to himself*; any man or woman of us would rebel at the idea of spending a life penned up in one room with his or her best

friend. Friendship could never stand the strain, and Friendship is a tough quality when we compare it to Love. We ask of Love—Love that is the most inscrutable, mutable, incoherent, plastic, volatile and exquisite capacity—a thing which in Friendship would be fatal. Boys, familiarity breeds not only contempt, but disgust, and it breeds it nowhere more quickly, more surely, than in marriage. There is too much intimacy—most marriages are intimacy gone mad. There is no life apart possible in the family life that is attempted in one room in a boarding-house or hotel, and the life apart, the opportunity to withdraw from each other, the chance to meet is the necessity of a happy, married life. People even who adore each other must get away from one another, if only for the joy of return. The wonder to me is,” continues the Bishop, “that there are so few divorces, and not that there are so many.”

“Doctor,” says Duane, “your premises must be granted, there’s not a doubt of that; but do even those premises make divorce right?”

“Those premises make human life wretched, intolerable, unbearable; make it an angry snarl or a perpetual worry or a heartbreak or a Hades. Now, I take it, while people are not created exactly for their own amusement and recreation, they are entitled to a reasonable amount of decent living and what is called happiness. If two people cannot live together in peace, fair contentment and the security of perfect understanding, I believe they should not live together at all. And whether I, or you, believe it or not, so long as the method of boarding-house and hotel one-room life is pursued they will not live together, but their strife and mutual weariness will drive them asunder.”

“They need not marry again, though,” ventures Tommy.

“They need not. But if they wish to, why should they not? If a woman has made a mistake and in her

girlhood married a man, as is very often the case, whom at thirty she absolutely has nothing to say to or vice versa, why should those people be compelled to pull together, and prevented from—once free of each other—marrying the man or the woman with whom they can sympathize, can be happy? ”

Billy sighed. Seaborough poked the fire again. Dan stuck his hands in his pockets.

“ I know what they say of me,” exclaims Gordon King, “ I know what you boys think of me: That I’m specious, worldly, undoctrinal, apt to destroy the fundamental principals underlying the national hearthstone, unfit for my office. God forbid!” he says reverently. “ I am, I suppose, a little before my time. God made His Church for the peoples whom He created; He did not build the Church first and create the peoples second. I am in the world in the twentieth century and I must fight the world, the flesh and the devil with twentieth century weapons and not with the pike and halberd of the Middle Ages. The days of the patriarchs and the patriarchal, simple, serious, constant life are over. The days of the strained and the artificial, the highly-wrought and the introspective, are our days: the days when men and women marry on nothing, attempt to lay the foundations of happy family lives in space fourteen by twenty, in a house with five or six or seven other pairs struggling with the same self-imposed handicap; the days when human nature beats its wings and must have freedom, space, air to breathe its own life; the days when divorce has got to be reckoned with and cannot be laughed or cried or preached or legislated down and out; the days when the marriages of divorced people must be recognized and when the Church, in those cases where there is no criminal impediment, cannot refuse her blessing to the man and the woman who love and are going to be faithful to one another. They call me a worldly old man. My sons, perhaps I am, perhaps I am.

My work is in the world and not in the cloister. I would not dare to turn my back on the marriage of the divorced until I can be positive that our blessed Lord does so."

"Dinner is served, Mr. Duane."

Allison rouses the men to the fact that they have lingered in the library a bit too long.

CHAPTER XLVI

Fatima Dances at Billy's House

MARJORIE is only entertaining a few guests who are to stop, of course, for the Bi-Monthly, it being March 22d, and her turn to entertain the Club.

That her husband is at home causes her some astonishment; she and Billy have not dined together, except once—and that was at the Pomeroy's—in an age. They see little of each other at all. A hurried "good-morning," as she passes the library door and leaves the daily assortment of invitations and cards on his desk; as hasty a query about, and settlement of, the necessities of the management of their various establishments—the yacht, the stables and any possible changes in the staff of upper-servants. These are the meeting-grounds of Mr. and Mrs. Duane.

After dinner, on this particular evening, in the half hour interim between the return of the women to the drawing-room and the arrival of the later guests for the entertainment, Marjorie saw her husband coming across the hall from the dining-room alone. She stepped out, just as she had done a dozen times before during the winter, and asked him courteously if he would not stop in for the show.

"What are you having?" he asked, carelessly enough, and perhaps for the want of something to say, as he stood there looking at her. She was very beautiful, very fetching, desirable, enchanting in his eyes. He had never once the season through, at any function before, asked her who the talent was to be that she had provided for the amusement of her guests.

"I have no one to-night but those queer coon jugglers and a Syrian dancer," she replies, turning away.

"What Syrian dancer?" Billy asks sharply.

"A woman—Fatima. The one who danced at Tommy's bachelor dinner" is the quiet answer, as she takes one more step toward a return to the room on the opposite side of the house.

"Marjie!" cried Billy, under his breath. "That woman can't dance here."

"Why not?" she says in an ordinary tone.

"Why didn't you consult me first" is his response.

Mrs. Duane smiled.

"Well," she said, "I haven't consulted you all winter as to the Egyptian fire-eaters, the Swiss warblers, the French stilt dancers, or any of the show people we've had and it didn't occur to me to make an exception this time. What is your objection to the Syrian woman?" she adds, in a patient, perfunctory way.

"She is not a proper person for you to meet, to speak to, to have in your house" is the reply, getting further away from the drawing-room.

"I don't understand you," Marjorie says, following him slowly.

"I forbid her coming here!" the husband exclaims hotly.

"Billy!" cries Marjorie in apparent consternation.

"How did you get hold of her?" he inquires quickly.

"Tommy sent her to me at my request. All the men told me she was so original and captivating," she speaks slowly, her eyes are down.

He is staring hard at her and his face is blanched and gray. He must tell her all now. "Come in here, Marjie," he cries, catching at the chiffons of her sashes and trying to draw her into the library. There is a sort of desperate entreaty in Billy's face; Marjorie sees it, uncomprehending its true source. She pulls from him, quite away.

"The Syrian can't come here!" he whispers.

Marjorie laughs lightly as she replies. "She is upstairs now."

"Pay her and send her away!" he urges.

"No; I can't do that, I have no one at all to take her place."

"I tell you, Marjie, that woman is not fit to come near—my wife." Billy is very near to her now, but his hands hang—he does not offer to touch her in any pleading fashion.

"You mean," Marjie answers, drawing further from him, "perhaps, that this woman has taken a false step some time in her past. Is that it?" she speaks coldly, clearly, deliberately.

"Yes." He paces up and down the hall.

De Barreaux is playing on the piano in the back drawing-room; the women are hovering about him, the few men already there are talking in low tones.

"How do you know it?" asks Marjie, leaning a little against one of the columns.

"I know it. That's all there is to it," he says, as if brought to bay. No; he can't tell her now.

"And," she answers, still with her eyes downcast, "if I struck all the men off my visiting list who have taken false steps, how many would there be left?"

"I don't know," he answers, in a dull way. She starts to go over to the other rooms.

"Marjorie, will you let me go and send the woman away?"

She looked up at him, straight into his haggard eyes. Her lips are parted to say "yes." She was one of the few women who would never have put a pebble in the man's path away from her; whose whole code was "if there can be 'another woman,' let her have him and let him have her; love dies in me when the love that created mine is impaired a thousandth part of its whole." But at this instant the Bishop, who had missed them both,

came out into the big hall and straight up to them. Marjorie went away to her guests.

Billy told the matter to her uncle in a cursory fashion.

"My boy," said the prelate, "your wife is correct. No woman has the right—surely no man—to draw aside from any woman on earth who is trying to earn an honest livelihood no matter what her past may have been. Billy, my son," linking his arm in his host's, "how do you know what this Syrian girl's temptations may have been? She may have loved some man as deeply as—my Marjorie loves you."

The Syrian danced at Billy's house, but for all her sad, eager searching she did not see the master.

Billy went over to the club and stayed there nearly all night.

CHAPTER XLVII

The Empty Flat In The Idalia

WHEN Isaacs, the detective, had first been put on the trail of the private gambling houses and had discovered that O'Leary's was among the list, he had spent some time in formulating his plan. He had the best thing of all in his favor—he was not known in the precinct. Added to this, he could, at will, assume an accent which was the counterfeit of his father's; he was capable of converting himself into one type of Parisian by the aid of well and suitably chosen clothes; the eye-glasses he now habitually wore—they were window-glass—and the slick, neat beard and moustache with its waxed end, were also quite in line with the character of a certain "Monsieur Louis Descourbes," who presently hired an apartment on the second floor of the Idalia, the house in the rear of Madam O'Leary's dressmaking establishment.

M. Descourbes paid in advance. He was quiet; he dealt in pictures and curios, rugs and bric-à-brac—his tiny parlor was stocked with these articles; he took his meals outside, he had a Frenchwoman come in twice a week and clean the rooms, he tipped the janitor in judicious proportion, assured the janitor's wife—weighing three hundred—that he had mistaken her for her own daughter, and declared to the daughter when she fetched him up some parcels that she was far better looking than any girl he had seen in America.

The apartment he rented had been vacant a long time. So long a time that Madam O'Leary and Hochstein both had grown somewhat careless as to a certain rear window on the second story—a window in the long extension

portion of the floor which was commanded solely by the windows of the vacant flat. From no other window in the exact rear of O'Leary's could there emanate the slightest danger to the methods of the dressmaker's ménage.

These two flat-windows, even after the place had been rented by the complaisant M. Descourbes, were never touched—not washed or opened or disturbed in any way. The yellow shades with their frayed and ragged fringes remained precisely as they had been, one down all the way, the other down to within an inch of the bottom, for the past year and a half. Neither was any light ever perceptible from these windows even when Madam O'Leary or Hochstein glanced out of an evening which they did merely as a matter of custom.

So far as these excellent persons knew the second flat in the Idalia was still vacant just as the third one was; the house had a reputation for imperfect drainage and a damp cellar.

Descourbes spent his evenings in this flat, oftentimes nearly the whole night. He saw the neglected shade and curtains of the extension window of O'Leary's house on his first visit. They had caused him to take the flat. Sometimes they were, however, not neglected; the page boy now and then drew them close and on these evenings Descourbes went out. He presently made the acquaintance of the page boy by asking him to deliver a letter for him and presenting him with a dollar for doing it. He gave him theatre tickets, too, and got him to run errands for him in the time when his employer sent him to do hers. He confided in the page boy—who was a lank youth of seventeen addicted, as Descourbes soon discovered, to romantic fiction—he confided to him that he himself was in love! Ah, yes! with a beautiful young lady of the four hundred who came to Madam O'Leary's not only to be fitted but for the play!

Oh, yes; the page boy need not pretend to be shocked. Descourbes knew it all. He might, if he chose to, present

his credentials and enter the room on the second floor of the house without a staircase, but the father of the young lady he adored would then doubtless horsewhip him, as he opposed his suit. All he asked was to be permitted to worship the young lady from afar when she came to O'Leary's to play the cards.

"But how?" demanded the page boy.

Now it is almost impossible to attain any underhanded end without assistance of one kind or another; the assistant may or may not be conscious, but in the hands of a clever manipulator he assists all the same.

"To see her I risk my life!" exclaims Descourbes. "If you but leave the curtains aside of the extension window I behold her!"

"Where from?" asks the page boy, his mouth agape.

"From the fence. I climb up from the yard of the Idalia apartment house there, I fear nothing! I enter at the basement as one grocer boy if you like. Ah, to behold her!"

"But even if I do leave the shade up and the curtains back," persisted the page boy, "the glass is ground and you can't see through it." Which was exactly the charming Descourbes' objective point in this ingeniously planned conversation.

"Ah, but my friend," and here Descourbes pressed a five-dollar bill into the moist palm of the page boy; "you will leave the window open, so, see? but four inches! It will be sufficient."

"Gee!" cried the page boy. "They'd kill me if they knew it! I'm to look every blessed night, twice over, and see that window's locked and bolted."

"Why?" inquires Descourbes, in innocent amazement.

"Fear of the cops and a raid," is the succinct answer. "The Madam, she's all right though, her cousin's Mike McGuire's wife, and he's the emperor of the east side, he is! You're a furriner and you don't catch on."

"No," assents Descourbes. "All I want to catch on

to is the fence where I can look at my young lady. You'll leave it open for me, won't you?"

"Well, I 'spose there ain't no danger; that flat in the Idalia house ain't rented——"

"No, no!" cries Descourbes. "A beastly hole. I went to see it for myself—it is impossible."

"Where do you live?" asks the page boy.

"At the Waldorf-Astoria," is the ready reply. As well mention one place as another thought Descourbes.

"I say," says the boy, as the orchestra ceases playing—the two are sitting in a Vaudeville Theatre on the boy's half-holiday—"I say, mister," holding out the five-dollar bill, "I'll leave the window open if you'll promise to see me through if they find it out. Get me another job if they fire me?"

"With all my heart. And each week you keep the window open for me of the evenings I give you five dollars, eh?"

"Bully for you. O.K. Open it'll be and you can come over from the Waldorf every night to look at your girl."

The urbane M. Descourbes contrived to see his young friend quite often, not only to repay him for his services but to reassure him and to glean from him considerable information of value in his own pursuits. It was entirely due to the revelations of the page boy that the detective settled upon the night of Thursday, March 31st, for the raid upon O'Leary's. The page boy had informed him that on that evening Mrs. Propper, now Mrs. Stowe, was fetching the English Earl to the game for the first time; that Mrs. Duane was to be there—her, the wife of the Mayor himself! He guessed the Mayor didn't know that Madam O'Leary had been trying to rope in the Earl for some time but had only just got the promise of him from Mrs. Stowe, who owed her a lot of money.

Long since, it may be assumed, M. Descourbes had

artfully elicited many other desirable details. Such as, that if the place ever was broken into by the police they'd have a rough time, for there was no stairs on the first floor (which Descourbes already knew, having called on Madam himself to buy a bonnet for his "absent wife" quite a month since!); that the elevator was protected by triple doors of sheet iron with patent locks, both on the first and second stories; that the rear and front windows were similarly equipped; that the whole electric plant of the house was controlled by pressing one button between the two large mirrors in the gambling room proper; that there was a staircase, a winding, iron, corkscrew staircase built in the back part of the house without a staircase, and that the door opening upon this was a sliding metal one located behind a large painting of Niagara Falls, at the west end of the room; that it had exits both upstairs to the roof and below to the street, this latter being covered by a gigantic ice-box in the kitchen hall, and both working automatically on the principle of a safe-lock, the combination known only to the Madam and Hochstein!

Descourbes, alias Isaacs, otherwise Isaac Schroeder, saw his father for a few minutes on Thursday morning. He had himself introduced to him at the Fifth Avenue Hotel by his own younger brother. The younger Descourbes invited Max Schroeder to a drink and talked cheerfully of London, Paris and Vienna. Then they sat down in the reading-room and their voices lowered, the younger brother apparently deep in the last edition of an evening paper.

"It's on for to-night" says the son.

"Sure?"

"Sure. I daren't wait a day longer. I'm afraid he's got on to me, anyway."

"Who?"

"Duane."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I told you before. He's found out I am not where he thought I was."

"Vhat," gasps Max Schroeder. "After me bayin' out der money to dem fools like vater!"

"Hush-h!"

"I'm goin' grazzy!" whispers the father. "Ikey, if I lose you, my poy, if he gets hold of you again, you're a goner."

"He won't get hold of me. He can't be sure who I am yet awhile—not for a few hours anyway. And in a few hours we'll have him. Look out for the white flag from the window. When you see that, as I told you, go and tackle him."

The younger son now shook his paper in a certain fashion. Both the other men rose; they knew they were being observed.

"Telighted to haf met mit you, M. Descourbes," exclaims Max Schroeder. "You must come ub und dine mit us."

"You must indeed," says the younger son.

"I will with pleasure, sir."

"To-morrow?"

"To-morrow."

They separated. Isaac Schroeder went down into the French quarter to a little restaurant to eat and thence, over the telephone, chose his men and told them to be at the flat in the Idalia by ten o'clock, to come singly and without exciting observation; to further this end, that they should begin to arrive as early as five o'clock in civilians' dress.

By the hour appointed these men were at the flat. They were detectives Cooney, Flint, Hammond and Shorter of Captain Chapman's precinct, five men from the inspector's staff, assistant district attorney Graves, county detectives Ryan, Brown, Heyer, Forbes and Gilfillan, together with six more picked men. Not one of them had the least idea upon what sort of a job he was

going to be employed. The newspapers had not had an inkling of the Captain's plans.

As soon as they were all assembled George Isaacs explained the exact nature of the night's work and furthermore spread out on a table for them to study, a graphic and comprehensive plan of the O'Leary room, with all its intricacies of electric bells, lift, secret staircase and sliding panels; requesting certain men to pay particular attention to certain details and giving his instructions minutely, clearly, and concisely.

The night was a dark one—which was something to the advantage of the invaders, as the glimmer of the electric lights was vague in the rear, where the tall walls of O'Leary's extension and of the apartment house combined to make the place gloomy.

Isaacs led his little band into the kitchen of the flat. He raised the shade cautiously, then the window, taking care to have no lights in the apartment. He pointed out to the fire-escape and then to the open window of the O'Leary house. The distance between the two was only fifteen feet; the building laws stipulate for twenty, but the Irish dressmaker, in putting up her addition, had violated it complacently, just as she violated many other laws of her adopted country.

Isaacs now indicated the broad, stout plank which he had had brought to the flat a week ago for the ostensible purpose of making additional shelves for his curios. Silently this plank was taken and placed, one end being on the floor of the fire-escape—which was only about five inches higher than the sill of O'Leary's open window; then with the utmost caution, Isaacs himself lending a hand, the plank was lifted and pushed across until, the window-ledge attained, it was carefully and steadily lowered into position—thus forming a not very difficult means of access to the house without a staircase.

By this time it was nearly midnight. As the men on the fire-escape crouched to measure the distance over

with their eyes and to habituate themselves to the idea of walking the plank; as the file of the rest stood in the little flat-kitchen, each one intent and absorbed in his own part in the attack; as Isaacs lightly threw himself over the railing, setting both feet firmly on the board, ready to lead his followers to what he assured them must be a certain victory—they could hear the music of the piano in the gambling room, the laughter and shrill voices of the women; could see as they stooped—through the bit of an opening—the flash of the bulbs and the incoherent movings of the mass of silks, satins, cloths, and chiffons; could hear the little Austrian singing out in French:

“Faites vos jeux, Mesdames et Messieurs. Faites vos jeux, s’il vous plait”; could see the wind stirring the pink velvet curtains into almost brushing the rich, black, spangled gown of Madam O’Leary as she swept by them.

George Isaacs’ heart was in his mouth. Would the dressmaker notice the open window? But no, she was entirely too much preoccupied with the pot of money she was raking in, too secure in her pull to even dream of the possibility of a surprise.

Isaacs started across the plank first, balancing himself adroitly as the improvised bridge swayed on his striking the middle. He was in evening dress with a raglan on and had his hair and beard arranged as “Des-courbes” habitually wore it. He carried his opera hat in his hand, a white silk handkerchief was thrust in his vest and he was armed. In the middle of the plank he paused, rolled the silk handkerchief into a ball and threw it back into the kitchen. He whispered “I had almost forgotten”; then aloud:

“Let Hammond take that and as soon as the lights are up—if they down them, that is—he is to go to the front window, unbar it and wave that rag out!”

“All right,” came back the muffled answer.

Then the new detective went on. The men watched

him well over, for the orders were that they were not to start until he had reached and effected a partial entrance. He now attained the sill and stepped firmly from the plank to the stone ledge, clutching at the window-frame with one hand and his hat under his arm, he stooped, raised the sash all the way without a sound, stepped down into the gambling room of the house without a staircase, screened himself for a moment behind the velvet curtains and threw back his hand in token that his men were to follow.

CHAPTER XLVIII

The Raid

WHILE the new detective had been drilling his men in the dark flat in the Idalia every bulb in the house without a staircase was ablaze. The great gambling room in its flood of rosy light saw itself reflected back and forth, bewilderingly, in the big mirrors that lined three sides of it; every window, rear and front, was barred, bolted, and sheeted with its copper screen except one: the page boy had dropped the curtains almost together—not quite—raised the shade, left the metal screen in its casing and that one window up just about four inches. No one observed that these curtains were apart except the page boy; in an excess of zeal he thought he saw Madam O'Leary's eye resting on them and he ran over and pinned them together, taking care a little later, when the game was in full swing, to saunter across and unpin them. Then he was called upon to hand champagne to the party playing pool, and punch to the people in the corner at bridge and, in point of fact, he quite forgot the window and Descourbes both this night, just as he had forgotten them other nights in the hurry and stress of his duties.

Madam O'Leary, in a faultless Paris gown of black with spangles, sauntered about the room. She was a burly woman with infinite tact, a daring spirit, and much physical courage. She had made but one mistake in her estimate of her own position and that was in regarding it as absolutely impregnable—not because of the copper protectors and bolts and bars, but on account of her

"pull." Her "pull" was the thing she relied on, the other precautions were merely adjuncts.

Not one of her patrons knew of the existence of the metal blinds and the back stairs. They may have had a vague idea that there was a flavor of mystery component with playing at O'Leary's, but none of them considered that they were doing anything in the least illegal or in any way "horrid."

Marjorie Duane was there—so were Mrs. Stowe and Dolly Propper. De Barreaux stood at the back of Marjorie's chair, Seaborough leaned over Dolly's. They, together with Jack Stowe, Phyllis Van Antwerp, Betty Davies, Mrs. Davies, Cecil Haven, Gerry Knox and a dozen more women, were all around the roulette table.

Hochstein, in immaculate evening dress, spun his ivory ball and rapped on the table-edge with his knuckles.

"Faites vos jeux, Mesdames et Messieurs. Faites vos jeux, s'il vous plait!"

"Oh, it's just lovely!" cried Dolly under her breath, her color rising and falling as she glanced up at her fiancé.

"Don't risk that chip on number thirty-six, Dolly!" cried her mother.

"No!" urged Phyllis, "by pushing it into the corner you can win on any one of four numbers!"

"That is safer!" smiles De Barreaux, as Marjorie covered the black.

"It was red and odd last time," she says, "it ought to be black and even this, don't you think?"

"There!" ejaculated Phyllis, "I've won something at last!"

"So have I!" chimes in Dolly.

"And I've lost—I always lose!" exclaims Mrs. Duane.

"Unlucky at cards—" murmurs De Barreaux in her ear.

"Mrs. Duane," says O'Leary, "you're bound to win

to-night, I feel it in me bones. Put it on the black and an even; now, choose eight!"

"I will!" says Marjorie.

She won. Of course she did; Hochstein was a most accomplished croupier. Mrs. Duane needed encouragement.

"Jack," said Mrs. Stowe, putting out her hand, "more money!"

"All you want," he answers, proud to give it to her.

"I'm broke," whispers Dolly.

"Never," answers the Earl, cramming his purse into her hand under the table.

"No," the Child says, pushing it back and getting up.

"Oh, nonsense," he replies. "I tell you to take it and play out your heart's content to-night, because, little girl, I can't let you come to such a place again in a hurry."

Dolly laughed.

"I guess," she says under her breath, "that you and I'll pull together pretty well, Reggie, because I've just made up my mind my first gamble'll be my last."

"Look! look!" Mrs. Stowe, Mrs. Davies, and Phyllis all screamed with joy as O'Leary remarked: "The ball's landed in the thirteenth hole—I knew thirteen was lucky!" Jack's bride was the winner—of a pretty big pile, too. She drank some champagne; most of the other women drank champagne. Marjorie did not, neither did Dolly.

Marjorie was too intent on the game to do anything else; her eyes sparkled, her cheeks were red as the reddest roses, her laughter came quickly, the blood in her veins rushed back and forth from her head to her heart.

She was quivering with excitement. She had been coming here now for a fortnight nearly every afternoon but this was the first time she had come at night. She had come because Dolly had told her she was

to be allowed to be there and Mrs. Stowe had sent word there was so much more excitement and interest about it at night. Excitement was what she wanted—interest was what she craved. She felt herself on the brink of a precipice and she knew that excitement was the one thing to keep her from falling over the edge into the abyss; so she threw herself into this with all the force she had. With the risk and the plunge she banished everything else from her mind. It was true that De Barreaux was beside her; she forgot him as she watched Hochstein spin the ball—better still, she forgot Fatima and almost forgot Billy. Life, to-night, seemed to have resolved itself into staring with straining eyes over at the little Austrian croupier—into watching his ball whizz and whirl and at last sink into a hole. Would it be her hole?

Life was reduced to an insane, feverish wonder as to a color and a number. To be sure.

Laugh? Yes, loud and long. Everybody was laughing—except the people who were losing too heavily. Some of them were actually crying and a woman, over there, who had lost all she had was falling off her chair. The man near her, Gerry Knox, was holding her up—she had been drinking too much wine. Someone was playing the piano now—who could it be?

It was De Barreaux; she had not missed him from her chair. What was he playing? The same sweet, strange, enticing melody he had played so long ago at Triborg! the music that had lured her down to him from her little balcony at the Beau Rivage.

How the long rows of wires in their pink bells swung and flickered; how the voice of Hochstein droned and faltered; how the voices of all the players were pitched at the very top of their strength; how the big picture of Niagara Falls seemed to sway on the wall and the pink plush curtains swung and the great buffet, with the dozens of decanters and glasses, rocked back and forth

and the mirrors were toppling over! And all the while De Barreaux played on.

She must get up and go to him—she could not help it. She had put her last money on thirteen again but she could not wait to see if she won or lost—she must get to De Barreaux! She rose from her seat and started to cross the room.

It was a brilliant sight, that room of O'Leary's. All the women in it were exquisitely gowned. O'Leary had made most of the gowns, Hochstein had fitted them—he had also fitted the complexions of several of the wearers of these gowns. The men were all good to look at—big, tall fellows, many of them; men of brain too as well as brawn. The great place was a sea of beautiful light, the air was fresh with the fans in the ceiling opening and shutting ingeniously like gigantic pink roses; one trod on pink rugs, piled high, so that one sank luxuriously safe. The excitement at the pool table, at the roulette table, at the bridge table was at its acme.

While De Barreaux—his Oriental brain intent, fixed on fetching Marjorie to him despite all the attractions of the game—played on, O'Leary took advantage of the tension and absorption to whisper to the alert croupier:

“Let his Lordship win once. We've done the best business to-night of the whole year.”

The little ivory ball whirled away, spun, slackened, rolled, and dropped. Doly won. Hochstein was an admirable man—he had a memory! He had not even at this date forgotten his having been the “assistant” of the great magician in Paris.

Marjorie was nearly at the piano. De Barreaux heard the soft swish of her skirts. He struck a strong, loud, dominant note; the lights and the perfumes and the breeze each seemed stronger, more climacteric, just at this juncture. The men and women were breathless watching their luck; the few who had won just now were

laughing and drinking. O'Leary was smiling approval at her croupier: she was proud of his dexterity.

Yes, it was a wonderful, brilliant, splendid moment of triumph for the little, fat Irishwoman, the cousin of Michael McGuire's wife. Also for another.

At that very instant, the new detective pushed aside the curtains and sprang into the gambling room and in his wake his twenty men dashed in too.

"The police are on to us," shrieked O'Leary, as she caught Hochstein by the arm.

"The police!"

"The police!" all the women and most of the men in the place took up the awful cry. With shrieks, screams, prayers for mercy; with scrambling, rustling, struggling—hither, yon—beating against walls, kicking, battering, rattling at lift doors, springing to windows to find them barred—all barred!

It was but a second. Then Hochstein wriggled out of the grasp of the man who had caught him, and the lights went out! The big, magnificent place was in total, complete, unbroken darkness. And the cries of the women were worse in the blackness than they had been in the glare. The men were quieter now, but everyone in the place knew the disgrace, the humiliation, and shame that inevitably awaited them unless they could get out. So they beat and forced and squirmed and crushed against one another.

De Barreaux said to Marjorie.

"Keep quiet."

"Yes," she answered, thinking of Billy. Even as she spoke Isaacs' man did his work. The bulbs flashed up to show the dressmaker and the croupier disappearing behind the big picture of Niagara Falls. Two of the new detective's allies fastened upon them, with jeering cries, just as the dressmaker was squeezing herself through the aperture of the sliding-panel.

In less than ten seconds Ryan and Brown had sta-

tioned themselves at the lift, which proved a useless manœuvre, as they could not make the big negro at the bottom run it up. He was loyal and Isaacs had not gotten the necessary password from the page boy—the only unrivettted link in his chain. Heyer slid open the metal screen of a front window and waved the silk handkerchief which Max Schroeder, covertly watching from a constantly moving electric, saw, and joyfully started off for the Slogan Club where he had telephoned McGuire to meet him.

The rest of the detective's corps went at their work with a will. They seized the women and thereupon were attacked by the men. A scrimmage ensued wherein, as the officers were armed and the civilians were not, the result was in the cause of law, if not of order. Six of Isaacs' men, under his shouting directions, held the gamesters at bay at the mouths of their revolvers; two or three of them were needed to pin down O'Leary and Hochstein; the rest proceeded to smash the gambling tables into slivers, seize the cards and chips and balls; to compel the croupier to divulge the combination of the "bank" lock and to help themselves, on the sly, to the wines.

It did not take as long to transpire as it does to set it down. It was a disgraceful scene—an epitome of the brimful depravity, thoughtless wrong-doing and disgusting methods of several kinds of humanity.

It was a scene of riot, curses, tears—the impotence alike of brave men and tenderly reared women in the face of those who were doing their duty—in their own way. Presently the gorgeous room presented a spectacle of entire devastation, and the anomalous picture of men who were unable to protect their womenkind from insult lest they should subject their womenkind to something worse.

"Go on!" shouted the new detective, as he leaped up on a chair. "Break it all up—don't leave a whole thing in it!"

Every woman in the place was weeping in half-crazed fashion except Marjorie Duane, with little Dolly Proper beside her; neither one made a sound. De Barreaux and Seaborough were near them. Seaborough held Dolly's hand. Marjorie waved the Hebrew from her, as she leaned a little against the piled-up ruins of the roulette table. She was one of those people who instantaneously rise to meet any situation—whose pride and balance are so great that they will not be downed until a crisis is overpast, who recognize at once that for some circumstances there are no weapons but submission and silence.

"Every one of you, without exception," cried out the leader, "has got to go to the West Thirtieth Street station and be locked up for the balance of the night, at least." The women moaned anew. The powerless men spoke or were still according to their several natures.

"Get that elevator door open and run it up, boys," he added impatiently. "These—ladies—can't be kept waiting. They must be sleepy!"

The detective's piercing eyes shot a stealthy, cat-like glance over at Marjorie Duane. She returned the glance—she could not help it; she was instinctively trying to recall its counterpart which lay back, somewhere, in her memory. Her heart bled within her; she forgot Fatima, Maro—everyone but Billy; and the agony of her shame was great that Billy would have to know this.

Isaacs himself now took hold of the great, double, copper doors of the lift-shaft and shook them with all his fiery strength.

"Run up this elevator or you'll pay for it!" he roared down through the metal lattice. "Damn you!" he yelled, "what do you mean by refusing to obey me. I am the Law."

There was a hush, everyone halted in their breathing even, to see if the lift man would, or would not do as he

was bidden. There was no sound; but the penned-up gamesters panted with the expectation of what might follow; with the hope that once the lift up and the doors unfastened—by the only person except O'Leary and Hochstein who knew how to unlock them—they might have a chance to bolt and escape. Then the slow wheels began to turn, the cogs to grind, the chains to grate—the lift was coming up.

“Faster!” cried Isaacs. Then to his men. “Watch out, now! Cover them! Let no one get away from you, boys!” He darted over to Marjorie.

“Madam, I'll take care of you myself! Remember, every soul of you in this room, I am acting under the orders of Captain Chapman of this precinct and that this raid is by express command of his Honor” (was there the suspicion of a sneer in the new detective's tone?) “the Mayor of the City of New York!”

With a peculiar, brutal laugh, lost in Marjorie's low, suppressed scream, Isaacs raised his grasping, eager hand to seize her. The locks and bolts of the lift flew back, the copper doors slid apart!

CHAPTER XLIX

The Mayor of New York

WHEN Max Schroeder reached the Slogan Club, McGuire, looking like a thunderbolt, met him at the side door and pulled him into the back room. He held an open letter in his hand.

"Read that," he said, putting it into the Democratic Chairman's hand.

Schroeder looked it over through his eye-glasses, mumbling:

"Hon. Michael McGuire :

"Dear Sir: The Mayor directs me to inform you that a public investigation of the disposition of the appropriation for the City's asphalt plant will be immediately instituted supplementary to that which has already taken place, and to say to you that he has in his possession the letter you wrote to Mrs. Duane last November.

"Yours respectfully,

"DAN. G. SATTERLEE, Sec."

"Oh!" cried Schroeder, "come off, Mac! Vat's der madder mit you?"

"Ye tould me ye got that letter back from her and that ye had it destroyed!" The Irishman ground the words through his teeth as a boar might grind his prey.

"Dot vas disgreption—I didn't vant to bodder you. Dot's notting—notting! Ve're on dop now McGuire! Mrs. Tuane's bein' dragged off to der station-house mit der girls from der streets! Ve're on dop!" The ex-valet and courier hopped about the room like one demented.

"Shut up!" says McGuire.

"Der cap's at der door; go on down unt see Tuane. I'll pet you any money you can make your own derms mit him. Ikey can keep it from der babers—he's managed der game so glose-mouthed dot not one of der poys is onto it yet. Threaten him mit der egsposeure as I told you pefore and I'll vait outside to see if you vin!"

"You blamed fool!" is the Alderman's reply. "Get out wid yer Ikey and yer newspaper rot, ye black-guard! Ain't I found out, not tin minutes since, that it's O'Leary's place—me wife's cousin's business—your son's afther breakin' up!"

"Vell, vell," soothes the other. "Dot vas der blace where Mrs. Tuane frequented. Ve couldn't do no good raidin' novhere's else; pe reasonable, Mac."

"Raisable, is it? ye scoundrel! an' me gittin' two hundred dollars a week from her fer police protection—twenty-five of it only to Barney Moriarty, the man on the beat, the rest in me own pocket!"

"Look-a-here!" says the Chairman, emphasizing his speech with a rapid fire of thumps on the table. "You're into dis hole as teep as I am. Your name don't abbear as endorsing the asphalt pill, but der Mayor knows as vell as I do dot you're behint it. He knows dot der money ain't been used for der blant! He's investigatin'—he's told you so himself!" Schroeder shakes Dan's note in the Alderman's face, as a puppy would shake a rag. "You petter get down to his Honor's house unt see vhat you can do," he adds.

"I'll not do it, thin," answers McGuire. "I'll not bind to no wan. I ain't der boss of der East side for nothin'. Let him investigate and to hell wid him and you too!"

"Put my son, Ikey, McGuire?" Schroeder's tone is a half-terrified one.

"G'wan wid you and your son!" cries the angry Tammany leader. "D'ye think I'm agoin' to back up a criminal anny longer! I owed you a debt fer yer gittin'

me reelected; I paid it up wid interest whin Ikey got out of jail."

"Hush-h," whispers the father trembling, glancing around him. "You vont go unt tackle Tuane?" he now asks in a curious, strained voice. He has with lightning-like celerity made up his mind just how he will even this night up with the Irish Alderman and accomplish it before morning, too.

"Nope," is the reply, "I won't."

Max Schroeder buttoned his coat, gripped his cigar more tightly between his teeth and left the Slogan Club.

While the foregoing conversation was in process on Third Avenue, the Mayor sat in his library busied with a mass of papers and telegrams in cipher. They all had to do with the elicited fact—in his possession only within the past ten minutes—that Isaac Schroeder was no longer an inmate of any prison in the United States. Billy was putting clews together, as his note to McGuire had demonstrated. He had been working sixteen hours a day on this case for several weeks. Two things urged him: a loyal, patriotic, and earnest zeal for his city's welfare and probity, and a desperate determination to try and put his wife out of his mind. The strain had raised him to the very top notch of that nervous alertness which cannot rest and which generally accentuates the mental forces to their acme of conception, execution and endurance.

He had read over and over the letter that McGuire had sent by Schroeder to Marjie. "Marjie!" Put her out of his thoughts?—he might as well attempt living without breathing.

What was she doing now? Where was she? Apart from him; their interests divided and their pursuits diametrical. And yet, she had, in November, started out with her wonderful quixotic expedition and plans to aid him in his proposed gubernatorial campaign. She had

accomplished much. It was to her that he owed his vast popularity in the western part of the State. For Billy knew that every one of the wheels that Marjie had swung into motion out in New Bremen were increasing in power and influence and scope every day. He knew that if he did receive the nomination he would owe much to her. Bah! what a contorted web the whole of life was! He could never again hold her in his arms—never again try brokenly to tell her of his worship. Marjie's happiness did not lay in his giving.

He bent his head again over the papers in front of him. Just then the bell rang and Allison admitted Dan Satterlee, who entered with a rush. Straight back to the library as the clock struck twelve.

"Billy, where's Marjie?" he asked breathlessly.

Billy looked in surprise.

"Is she in the house?" gasped Dan.

"I think she is out—yes, I am sure she is—" the husband answers, half mortified, as he realizes that he can't answer decisively.

"Do you know where she is?"

Billy shook his head.

"Is there anything the matter with Sally or Aunt Sophy?" he asks quickly.

"No, no, Billy. More than that, I'm afraid. When I came in here Monday morning Dolly Propper was leaving with Seaborough. I remember she told me that her mother had sent her to tell Mrs. Duane to be sure and be at O'Leary's on Thursday evening."

"Well," answers Billy, "then I daresay she is at O'Leary's. Dressmakers have odd times for their fittings, as they call them I be—" Mr. Duane could not finish, Mr. Satterlee stopped him.

"Billy!" seizing the Mayor's top-coat and hat and rushing him into them; "Captain Chapman's new detective, that Isaacs fellow, is raiding O'Leary's now, now! I've just been at the precinct house on another matter



**“MARJIE . . . THREW HERSELF BETWEEN HER
HUSBAND AND THE ASSASSIN”**

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and Chapman told me. It's the first breath of it that Isaacs has permitted to be mentioned. Billy, if Marjie should be there!"

But Billy Duane had not waited to hear the last words. He was out in the street, into the electric, and off to the house without a staircase before Dan had gotten through speaking. He dashed from the vehicle, before it actually stopped, up the stoop; the burly negro opened the door ajar, the Mayor pushed in toward the lift.

"Take me up," he orders breathlessly, tense, white, drawn, as he hears the commotion above.

"Can't do it, sah. Don't unlock dis yer combination for no one."

Billy glanced at him.

"Look here!" he says. "If you don't get me up inside of two seconds I'll kill you."

The negro did not hesitate now under the blaze of those eyes, the grip of that fist. The secret bolts slid back, the copper double doors opened, he was in the lift—the wheels and cogs and chains were working.

It had taken just seven minutes from the time he left his house. Palpitating in that velvet, swathed cage, these last few seconds seemed to him an eternity as he rose slowly, slowly to Her! He plunged frantically at the metal barriers as the negro steadied the machine and unfastened the locks.

He heard the new detective's last words: "the Mayor of the City of New York!"

He heard his wife's smothered, pitiful scream; he saw the uplifted, desirous hand; he even saw, too, that Isidoro De Barreaux was springing to her. Billy dashed the Hebrew out of his way and seized the detective's arm just as it was pouncing on Marjie's shoulder. Their eyes met—the Mayor's eyes and the new detective's—full, unflinching on either side.

"Hammond," said Duane, not letting go his hold, "arrest this man!" The three words fell like a thunder-

bolt among the groups of terrified, stunned men and women.

Isaacs laughed as two of his own subordinates sprang to do the bidding of the Mayor. He was passive and unconcerned.

"What's the charge?" he asked glibly.

"Murder," is Duane's answer. "You are Isaac Schroeder, the man who killed the negro, Henry Johnson, at New Bremen; the man whose way out of jail and away from justice was bought by the City's money."

Isaac Schroeder was peaceable; he disarmed his captors at once by his quiet demeanor. Hammond and the other two let go their hold of him but stood near.

With a movement swifter than the electric flash, his right hand sought his breast pocket, he drew the knife and raised it to Billy Duane's heart. But Marjie, the only human being who had seen and realized it, threw herself between her husband and the assassin. Hammond caught Isaacs by the shoulder; a dozen others dashed to the rescue, but it was Marjie's frail body that averted the stroke—that made Isaac Schroeder understand that his game was up. With a horrible laugh he turned the blade upon himself and never spoke again.

O'Leary and Hochstein were taken off—McGuire bailed them out the next morning. Duane pledged himself as answerable for all the others.

Dan took Marjorie home. Billy stopped to attend to the necessary details and formalities and then followed. When he reached the house Allison told him that Mr. Max Schroeder was waiting to see him, on very important business, in the library.

Billy went in there.

"Mr. Mayor," began Schroeder, "I got someding very particklar to tell you."

"Go on, Mr. Schroeder," said Duane, standing, and not inviting the visitor to sit.

"Yer see, I hate ter tell yer, but it's all in der line of

pisness. Your wife's been arrested joost now at O'Leary's for gambling and she's bein' took mit der street gang to der cells for der night."

Billy stands perfectly still. Schroeder's mean face is distorted with vanity, vengeance, craft, and cunning.

"It'll all pe in der babers to-morrow. Ah, I know you vonce said you'd kill me if her name got dere but I ain't afrait of you. No, I can geep it out of dem if you say so. Unt der teal is—you stop der investigation of der asphalt money!" The Democratic Chairman leers up into Billy's face. "Joost make your choice, your Honor, only make it qvick! Vill yer or won't yer?"

"Mr. Schroeder," Billy Duane said, in a cold yet compassionate way, holding open the door of the room, "your son Isaac is dead. Go home to your wife and family!"

"My son! My son, Ikey! Dead! What you talkin' apout? You can't scare me fer a cent. My son! dead!" The father laughs gleefully.

"Mr. Schroeder," says Billy, "there's a cab at the door here always. Take it and get over to O'Leary's. Your son lies there to await the action of the coroner's jury to-morrow morning."

Then the chairman looked piercingly at the Mayor and read the truth in the compassionate eyes.

"Oh, you tamnable rich man, you!" he cried vindictively. "You got der pest of me! My son! my son!" and weeping he walked away, out of the house, and went over and watched until daybreak beside his boy.

CHAPTER L

The Divorce

THE next morning Marjorie was in her boudoir sitting thinking over the events of the previous night. She espied De Barreaux's ring gleaming on the piano rack where he often laid it when he played—he had forgotten it the day before. She went over, took it and slipped it on her finger so that she should remember to give it to him when he came. She felt sure that he would come very soon; he came nearly every day now, and his visits soothed and gave her a kind of negative pleasure—in other words they, for a time, took her thoughts from other subjects.

She sat down to her desk to write the notes of the day; for Marjorie contrived, amid all the rush of her life, to attend to her own correspondence. She heard Billy's step coming from his rooms across the hall. He did not tap at the door, but opened it and walked in, something in the old frank fashion of their past.

"Good-morning," he said brightly, coming behind her chair and laying his hands on her shoulders.

The wonder shot through Marjorie's mind.

Did Billy spend all his leisure time with Fatima? She shrank a bit from his touch and his hands were lifted away.

"Good-morning!" she said, and then began to speak of the gambling house and the pain and shame and mortification of it all and her own misdoing.

"Not a word of it," he answered. "Let us forget it, not speak of it, blot it all out. Marjie, all I care to remember of last night is that you threw yourself between me and death!" Billy's voice is low, more tender than

any woman's voice ever was, more thrilling and sweet and exquisite. His arms behind her are reaching toward her, his confession, so often on his lips, is now most surely to be made; his hope is high. He has not slept a moment since he came back from O'Leary's and dismissed Schroeder. He has spent those hours waiting for this moment. He believes that had not his wife cared somewhat for him she would not have—without a second's reflection—thrown herself between him and Isaac Schroeder's knife.

Then he sees, for the first time, De Barreaux's ring shining on her finger—the third finger of her left hand. It is big and has slipped well over her wedding-ring and hides it almost completely. He drew back; he crossed to the fireplace. He said to himself, "I love her better than life or death or hope of future or dream of past. If I do love her this way her happiness is the greatest of all things to me; if her happiness is with this other man, then to this other man she must go. Perhaps I was a fool to permit him to see her, yet—if he could take her from me, if anyone could take her from me—they must. That is all. I wronged her in not telling her of Fatima—this possibly is my reward. Her happiness? It must lie with the man whose ring she wears to cover mine."

Billy was quick of thought and action. He turned his back to the fire and said, "Well, I suppose, taking all things into consideration, a divorce will be the best way out of—our—dilemma?"

Marjorie, toying with her pen, made to scribble a word or two as if trying its point; her breath was almost clean gone, but she answered after only a second's pause, in a dull, even voice.

"I suppose so."

A divorce! Billy wanted one—to marry Fatima? Impossible! Yet men married strangely sometimes, and it was incontrovertible that Fatima had the best, first

right to bear his name! She may have thought, up to this moment, that her husband's heart was far away from her, but this blinding moment revealed to her that she had lived on the hidden hope that one day—some day—Billy would return to her. Would she have forgiven? Did she love him? Well, it is impossible to separate a woman's love and a woman's forgiveness—they are one.

When Marjorie said "I suppose so," in that even, matter-of-fact tone, her husband knew that he had, all these months while he had watched her with the Hebrew, and seen her slipping farther and farther from himself, still been believing that at last—in the end—Marjorie would come back to him. That cool, relentless answer almost knocked him senseless, strong as he was. He could not see her face; she did not see his.

He went half way to the door, then spoke.

"I will take care to make things perfectly possible for you; to make it so that you will have no difficulty in getting it; there need be no publicity."

"I don't doubt you," is the dreary answer.

"Will you allow me to ask if you have consulted anyone yet?" he inquires.

He does look at her now—and all the fierce, primal passions of a man who realizes that a woman belongs to him, all the love, all the tenderness, all the mad jealousy, all the lately held down instincts of protection, possession and consolation burst into flame in his heart and soul. He even makes an infinitesimal motion toward taking her to him. Then he stops short as she speaks:

"No, not yet." It is so lightly said, with such a whiff of an airy smile as she might utter some badinage at a dinner-party; but no torrent of impassioned reproach or scorn could have more effectually recalled him to a preservation of the present attitude.

"Then," he says, not as lightly as she has spoken—few men can banter with their Holy of Holies: many women can and do—"then, if you will permit me to say

so, I should recommend that it will be best for us to keep up the——”

“The farce?” she almost laughs now.

“A little longer,” he finishes gravely, accepting her word.

“Until after my next Tuesday, for example?” she rattles on. “I have invited a lot of people and I should hate to recall and it would not be quite good form to have them come after the affair got out.”

“No,” he assents. “Very well then, I will send my lawyer to yours the latter part of next week.”

“Yes,” she replies cheerfully. “That will be very nice indeed, I’m sure.”

Billy did not trust himself to even say good-morning, but left her and went away out of his house. He went down in the country to the Westbury place as fast as a Searchmont could take him; and when he got there he mounted the most dangerous horse he owned and went off, off—galloping, pounding the road to the other end of the island, to the wildest part of the shore where the rocks are piled high and where the sullen, black, winter sea beat and broke and struck, and foamed and gnashed the day and the long night through.

He tied his beast to a pine-tree and lay down on the rocks; he was soaked by the spray. It was bitterly cold; even the salt water froze in his clothes, yet Billy was warm—it seemed to him that he was gradually but surely burning up. He lay there all night with open eyes that saw the sun go down, sulkily, like a little red ball in the west. Saw it rise in a virginal flush of rose in the east, saw the sea-birds hover hungrily and dart and shimmer and ride on the incoming tide; heard his horse neigh for food and the far-off jangle of a bell.

Then he got up and led the horse to a farm a mile away, and had him fed and rubbed down; mounted him, went back to the Westbury house and then to town and to his usual routine.

CHAPTER LI

The Hebrew

AFTER her husband left her Marjorie sat very still. This, then, was the end of her life. She rose to go over and lock the door; she wanted to be alone. As she reached the door, De Barreaux knocked and entered.

His great anxiety was to know how she fared after last night. He perceived intuitively that the jar had been almost too much for her; of course he could not know of what had just transpired between her and Billy. He felt a crisis in the air and with mortal fatuity believed it to be his crisis—a thousand times the more so when his quick eyes detected the ring on her finger.

She had looked at it after Billy left her and concluded that it might as well remain there as anywhere. That, or anything else, mattered not now.

If ever a man who loved a woman had a situation made for his success by the combinations of fate, that man was De Barreaux. Sore, heart-riven, her pride wounded, her very life scorched and seared, Billy's wife stood before him in need of all the balm and comfort and adoration which he had to offer. Her eyes had travelled to his ring with his eyes. She made to take it off.

"I was afraid it would be lost," she explained.

He prisoned the hand in his.

"Do not take it off! Let me put it on again."

She shook her head.

"No rings!" she laughed.

"Yes, one—from me." He humored her now, however, and replaced his ring on his own hand. "A

different one than this—a little plain one, some time in the future?"

"Hush!" she says wearily.

"Oh, Marjorie, am I never to be allowed to speak! to tell you what I hope, what I believe, what I know!" he cries impassionately. "I know you are to be mine—we are to be each other's! You cannot lead this life—this life of sham and ice and superficiality. Your heart is dying within you; it is not right. God never so intended it. Ah, I can no longer restrain myself!" he is on his knee near her, his beautiful pale face aglow, transfigured with the ardor of his love. "Will you not separate yourself legally from Duane and let me woo you, win you, make you mine? Forgive me! have mercy upon me," he whispers, "I care for you so that whether you forgive me or no I must tell you, urge you, beg, pray to you, as to the great Jehovah Himself to give me hope. Promise me, Marjie?"

If her soul bled here indeed was healing.

"I am going to have a divorce," she says. The Pole's eyes blaze. "It is all settled."

"Marjorie! Then, then!" he catches at her folded hands and kisses them, "then, afterward, by-and-by—I will be patient, my darling one—you will—be—my wife?"

She looked at him a moment and the ideas that possessed her would have struck him dead if he could have perceived them. She shook her head; a certain dismayed disgust was what she felt.

"Ah," he cries humbly, "I am too precipitate! but it is my joy, my rapture to hear that you will be free that pleads my excuse—if in your dear eyes I need excuse. I do not, though, do I, Marjorie? my Marjorie? because"—his arms are indeed around her—"you love me, do you not?"

She waited a moment. She didn't mind the touch of his arms, why should she? Billy would not mind if he

were there to see it. She even had a half distaste for giving anyone a knock that would send them toppling from Paradise to Hades!

But after the moment was past she said very low but very clearly:

"No, I don't."

He sprang up; strange thoughts flashed through his oriental brain. Could she have been, all this while, in league with the husband to thwart and make a fool of him? He glanced down at her. Ah, no! these were madman's fancies; in that pure, cold, sorrowful face there was no hint of scorn or triumph.

"But I can teach you to do so," he says, kneeling again beside her.

"That is the one lesson that can never be taught or learned," she answers—"to love."

"But, my Marjorie—ah, I must call you so, I must! I will not say that you have made me believe that you cared for me. I will only say you have not forbidden or disdained me—" he pauses.

"I have been weak and I have sinned," is her answer. "No married woman should receive the attentions that I have from you."

"You have only listened, my dearest," he pleads.

"Ah, but I should not have listened. You have fascinated me, charmed me."

"Let me continue to do so," he urges. "I am patient. I can wait any time, only let me hope!"

"It is over," she says drearily. "You do not fascinate me any longer."

"Marjorie, you are fagged, worn out, overdone with that horrible last evening at O'Leary's. You are not yourself. Think, remember, I have been some comfort to you, do not banish me! Ah, in words I cannot say what I wish to—only in music!" He went to the piano and played.

His very brain and all its thoughts spoke to her in

the exquisite, tremulous melody. She seemed to see floating before her the beautiful studio in the village of Ahlesh Shemal: the lights in the brass lanterns burned low, the incense in the brass urn smouldered; the sandal, the aloes and myrrh and frankincense and ambergris and benzoin and rose leaves—all sent their fragrance to greet her as she entered there. She saw herself, as if she had been some other person, and Isidoro De Barreaux met her at the threshold and led her to the piles of cushions and struck the sweet woods and gums into denser smoke and made the lamps burn brighter and put a priceless Eastern garment about her shoulders and fetched dainties for her to eat; and the sound of lutes and viols was in the air and the hangings blew back and forth and the lamps swung; and all was in her honor and praise and he was worshipping her!

De Barreaux's every pulse was throbbing with expectancy. He turned his head a little in hope, but Marjorie did not move or even stir. Then, in a fright, he stopped and looked at her. Her feet were on a hassock, her elbows rested on her knees, her chin in her palms; her dark blue eyes seemed almost black under the black brows and above the dark shadows beneath them; her lips were red but her cheeks were pale. Her face, her attitude were the epitome of the forlorn, the deserted, the heart-broken.

The Hebrew was staggered. What he beheld spoke more distinctly to him than much or any speech. She glanced up.

"You see," she says, nodding over toward the piano, "it is useless. Everything is useless."

He came a step nearer to her, his own features distorted with an agony of grief and pain. He was extremely gifted with perception—it almost amounted to divination.

"Do you love Billy Duane?" he whispered, in a low, harsh tone.

“Yes,” she said with a sigh, “I do.”

He went away without a word to the studio in the village of Ahl-esh Shemal and presently to Warsaw. But as he quitted Marjorie’s house he had muttered to himself:

“These Christians!”

And he had heard like a refrain sounding in his ears Bishop King’s words:

“Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.”

CHAPTER LII

"Mrs. Arnold."

MRS. JACK STOWE had not had the opportunity of making any very startling social record on the evening of the Bi-Monthly; but on the following Tuesday, Mrs. Duane's weekly at home, she got in a bit of a chance.

It was there that Dick and Imogene's marriage was announced; there also that little Dolly's engagement to Seaborough was formally made public. Mrs. Loring was present; so—to render things more active—were Mr. and Mrs. Propper.

There were quadrilles. Marjorie was the first woman in New York to reintroduce the old-time dance which everybody professed themselves charmed with. In one set Mr. and Mrs. Jack Stowe and Mr. and Mrs. Propper found themselves vis-à-vis. Dolly and the Earl were one side and Mrs. Loring and Cecil Haven on the other. It was rather a stunning arrangement but not one of the persons concerned seemed in the least disturbed by it unless, possibly, Mrs. Loring. She had consistently ignored her old acquaintance, Mrs. Stowe, and was evidently now anxious to take up another line of action.

After the dance the matron spoke to Dolly.

"My dear," she said, "I want to congratulate you."

Dolly stared; a courteous, well-bred stare.

"Ah?" she answered. "On what, Mrs. Loring?"

"Your engagement to Lord Seaborough."

The Child laughed merrily.

"It seems to me, Mrs. Loring, you are trying to drive in a new tack, but I'm afraid your hammer will never send it home."

"My dear, you were always so witty!" is the response given with abundant good-humor. "Do present his Lordship to me, won't you?" she adds.

"Couldn't do it!" answers the juvenile fiancée. "You see, it's your own fault, Mrs. Loring. You've given mama the cold shoulder all along and now that you're thinking about launching your girls in London society, I can't—really I can't!—help you. So sorry—but you should have had more forethought!"

A good many people heard this, among them Mr. Stowe and Mr. Propper. Dolly's papa, who was a very jolly lot, came over and applauded her spirit. So did her step-father; in fact, the two men met over the little girl's hand. She presented them to each other with the most apt grace and sent them away from each other with a perfect *savoir faire*.

"That child is fit to be a countess," remarks the Hon. Cecil Haven to Gerry Knox, as they went back into the conservatory together.

Billy and Marjorie had scarcely met at all since their talk on Friday morning. To-night Billy was ready to go out to one of his clubs, was just getting into his coat when the Bishop came along with a friend of his who was from Nova Scotia, in town only for a few days and anxious to meet the Mayor of New York.

"Dr. Hatley's first visit to the States, Billy. I knew him well when I spent a year in Digby and I take pleasure in bringing you two men together."

Billy off with his coat and glad to do all honor to the Bishop's friend. They had quite a chat about Canada, annexation, municipal affairs, republics and monarchies, the Roman and the Anglican churches in the provinces—a thousand things—Judaism, socialism, Methodism.

When the Hebrew subject arose, Billy found himself turning his chair a trifle so that he could look across the hall into the opposite suite. The Mayor's house was

a double one, with rooms on either side of the big central hall. Billy was looking to see when De Barreaux came in, but he did not see him enter. The Bishop said presently:

"You must take Hatley over and present him to Marjie." He then went over himself to the drawing-room.

Billy said: "I will, with pleasure."

"Ah!" exclaimed Dr. Hatley, whose glance had followed the prelate's exit, "I see someone there whom I know!"

"Indeed," is the host's reply, "I am glad you are finding friends here, Doctor: who, may I ask?" he has risen and his glance is on his wife.

She is standing talking, with all her splendid, vivid animation to a group of people. She looks very radiant, very beautiful—to him most entrancing. She has on some sort of a pale pink gown and rubies and diamonds are sparkling on her throat and arms.

"That lady in pink," the Canadian replies, "a very beautiful lady Mrs. Arnold is."

"I see but one lady in pink," is the host's smiling answer, "and her name is not Arnold."

"Yes, I see only one lady in pink," laughs Dr. Hatley, "but her name is Mrs. Arnold. She fetched her boy up only a few weeks since and left him as a pupil in my little school." By this time Billy, somewhat amused, and the stranger have crossed the hall together and are at the entrance to the drawing-room. Imogene is standing there quite near to Marjorie.

"A mistaken identity case, my dear sir." Billy now laughs as he turns to Imogene, presents Dr. Hatley to her, and adds:

"Dr. Hatley is trying to persuade me, Mrs. Peevor, that the lady in pink is a Mrs. Arnold!"

Imogene laughs, a nervous, awkward laugh, and draws nearer to Marjorie.

"Absurd!" she exclaims, with frightened eyes.

Marjorie saw the Canadian now. She turned away and went on with her rattling chat to Dan Satterlee. The room swam before her and she thought she was being swallowed up by some horrible, billowing swamp. She heard Billy say, with a laugh:

"You see, sir, 'Mrs. Arnold' does not recognize you!"

"Mrs. Arnold!" exclaims the undeterred man from Digby, going straight up to the lady in pink, "Mr. Duane here insists upon it that you are not you, but I know he is mistaken. How do you do, Madam? the little boy is well and happy."

Marjorie drew herself up a little. It was an amusing situation for every one of the little group of onlookers, except for poor Imogene.

"Sir," Marjorie said, "Mr. Duane is not mistaken—but you are!" She smiled her usual gracious, gentle smile.

"Billy, present your friend to me, will you not?"

"Dr. Hatley, Mrs. Duane!" the Mayor says it proudly, a little in laughter still at the new guest's consternation.

"I am charmed to meet you, Doctor," she says. Then she turns a little aside with him, for his honest, wholesome, provincial countenance is an epitome of non-plussed positiveness, and she says, in a very low tone:

"I beg of you to let it go at this!"

Billy heard her; the laughter froze on his lips. He stood still, leaning against the door-way—death was gripping at his heart-strings. He was blind, he saw nothing, no one about him; but shut in upon his eye-balls was the image of her fair, smiling face; resounding in his ears, rather than the music or the voices or the gayety of these people present, was the echo, over and over and over again, of her few words to the Canadian.

Imogene noticed him, and came and spoke to him and

got him to go with her and Dick into one of the other rooms and tried to get him to talk. Imogene felt sure that once he and Marjorie could see each other alone all would be made right. The thing, she thought, for her to do was to keep him from going out.

There was no danger, Duane did not want to go out. He wanted to stop just there and watch for De Barreaux to come in.

Imogene and Dick tried all sorts of topics, but their host slipped off most of them until the young husband finally said:

"I forgot, Im, to tell you the latest piece of news. De Barreaux has gone away."

"Where to?" she inquires.

"To Warsaw."

"When is he coming back?" Imogene asks, because she observes that Billy is listening with a show of interest.

"Never!" answers the husband.

"Nonsense!" exclaims the wife.

"Fact," ejaculated Dickey. "I saw him this morning before he sailed and he told me his plans. Most extraordinary man!"

"What are his plans?" Duane asks.

"Well, he's going back to Poland to organize a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. A pilgrimage of Hebrews, of course, to desecrate the Holy Places."

"He is a lunatic!" cries Imogene.

"No," remarked her husband, "he is merely a disappointed man, I take it."

Billy did not show a disposition to go out of the house, so Imogene took Dickey and went home. Everybody was going home now; Bishop King and Dr. Hatley had left some time since. Marjorie had bade her last guest good-bye.

Billy was watching her from the hall. He sent Allison and the footmen off; he turned the lights half out

himself; he met her as she was starting to go upstairs. He barred the way.

"Marjorie," he said, very gently, "who is Dr. Hatley?"

"A friend of Uncle Gordon's you said, did you not?" she answers.

"You and he have met before to-night!" Billy says, still more gently.

"I don't understand you."

"Before he spoke to you to-night he insisted to me that you were a Mrs. Arnold and had lately been up to Digby and placed a little boy with him at school."

"Did he?" she says, in a hopeless way.

"Yes, dear, he did. And I heard you when you asked him 'to let it go at this.'"

"Did you?" she says, in the same spiritless fashion.

If Marjorie had felt the stake fires burning at her feet she could not have told her husband the facts then. The possibility rushed through her mind only to be scorned. She, from whom Billy wanted a divorce, tell him! She permit him to think for an instant that she had taken charge of his child for the sake of her love for its father! She let him know that all along, while he had not told her, she still had known? No, oh no!

"Marjorie," the husband says, "why did you go there and under an assumed name? Won't you tell me, dear?"

"What right have you to question me?" she asks, in a monotonous, disinterested way.

"The right of a husband," he answers. "We are still husband and wife."

"So we are," Marjorie replies, sitting down on the stairs.

"Marjie, whose child was it that you took up to Canada?" Billy sat on a step below his wife, he took her hand and his dark eyes were riveted on her lips.

"Tell me," he pleads, his voice dropping to the merest shadow of a sound. "Was it—yours?"

She does not move; she had not looked for this interpretation. The whole world with all its creeds and formulas and rights and wrongs and standards and criterions fell away from her vision. What difference did anything make, except that Billy shall never know by any sign how dear he is to her?

"What if it were?" the words come to her to utter just as they surely must have to any pure woman of infinite courage, and given an infinite sense of justice, who at the same time was absolutely indifferent to the opinion of herself she might create by their utterance.

"Almighty—" Billy does not finish. Nor does he relinquish the hand which she has not withdrawn from his.

"Supposing now it were the other way," she goes on, and the light begins to come into her eyes once more, "and it had been yours, and I had discovered that before you married me you had loved someone else." Marjorie was still alive, and the stigma of his reticence as to Fatima was pricking at her heart; it was in this crisis a not unfortunate tonic. "What would I do in your place, eh?" she concludes.

He dropped her hand, stood up and looked down at her. He heard nothing of her inquiry, made nothing of it at all—except the one suggestion it contained of her having loved another man than himself before his day.

"Did you love the father of that child in Canada?" he asks fiercely.

"Yes," she replies, glad to be able to tell a simple truth.

"Do you love him now?"

"Yes," she says, with a certain gentle decision, more as if speaking to herself than to anyone else, "I love him now."

There was a pause between them.

"How old is—the child?" he asks.

"Ten years," is the answer.

He groaned and turned away his face from even looking at her drooping head. She knew what he thought—she did not care. If it remained with her he would never know the truth. He had kept his past from her, she would never tear the veil from it. Their lives would soon be wholly apart and her mind was in so distorted a state that she had not the least aversion to Billy's thinking anything of her he saw fit. In fact—so introverted can a woman's mental vision become—she actually and deliberately said within herself: "If the man who has been my husband can think this thing of me, well—he may!"

Billy was not much at introspection or that, and while he was almost paralyzed, he still accepted what she had said, just as he would have accepted a decree from on high. If his wife Marjorie said it, it must be true.

She got up and went upstairs.

He paced up and down the hall and the rooms until morning. De Barreaux had left the country never to return. Of course that was mere decorum—he would presently come back and be married to Marjorie. To which of them would Laddie be intrusted? He would not like for Laddie and the child up in Canada to grow up together, but if Marjorie wanted Laddie he would not say her no. And was De Barreaux the man whom his wife had loved long before he and she had ever met? Yes, he supposed so. With what an air of confidence the Hebrew had met him there at Tommy's dinner. To be sure, why not? De Barreaux then had good cause to laugh.

Billy Duane went over to the safe and picked up the case of pistols lying on top of it. He took one out, saw that it was loaded and even placed the muzzle to his heart. Now if Isaac Schroeder had only gotten that knife into him!

And she had saved him from it—what for? This? this ruin and devastation and shame and horror.

Then he thought of Fatima. Well, Billy was a just man—it was horror for horror. He remembered that Fatima had a little child; that it was his; that he had heard that it was dead.

Now it became morning. He went up to his rooms—he had laid the pistol away. The thought came to him that, some day, even after she had had her heart's desire, Marjorie might need him. He loved her with such an intensity that he was willing, no—he was glad—to take up life again on such a film of chance.

CHAPTER LIII

Marjorie Goes Away

MARJORIE felt that she could not stop a day more in her husband's house. The Westbury place belonged to her, having come to her from her mother's estate. She had a couple of trunks packed, took the little lad and his nurse and went to the farm. The house there was kept always in readiness; the housekeeper never failed.

They reached there at night. Word had been left with Allison that Mrs. Duane had been called out of town suddenly by some affairs at Westbury; appearances must be kept up, she supposed, a little longer. She meant, as soon as she got there and a bit rested, to write the Bishop and tell him the bare facts of the impending divorce. She expected, too, to hear from Dr. Hatley as to the boy Maro: perhaps to be asked to remove him—she did not know, scarcely cared.

She was unaware that De Barreaux had sailed, but she did not look for, expect, or miss him. She slept some that night, but wakened early, before daybreak; she saw the stars fade and go out and the morning being born in the far-off east. The windows were open and the chilly air felt to her fresh and sweet. She would get up and make her toilette and go out in it, feel the wind of the spring blow all about her.

As she stepped out on the stone terrace, which she and Billy had planned together, she was glad that she was free of the town. It was a beautiful terrace—long and broad, with a balustrade and a roof, vases here and there just now bursting into the first bloom of the crocuses,

tulips, and hyacinths. The square beds were gay with them, too, in the pretty Dutch garden that grew on the terrace. She sat down on one of the low, broad seats and looked off. The splendid breadth of the farm lands lay stretched before her: the meadows rich and brown mostly, here and there only pricked by the pushing green; the hedge-rows spiked with blossoms; all the shrubs hanging out their tiny emerald flags; down yonder, in the marshy hollows, the iris, royal in its purple garments; up the hillside the sheep and lambs playing in the dew and the sunshine. She could hear the lowing of the cows coming up for the milking from the pasture and the clarion notes of the geese, the gabbling of the ducks, the cackling of hens, the colts whinnying, the big stable bell jangling out the hour of five. It was not cold and she had a big fur cloak about her for protection.

It was one of those days of darling April when she forgets that she is March's child and only remembers that she is the mother of the May. A day, so full of vernal softness and sweetness and delicious peace and freshness, as can but prove the oil of gladness poured upon the sorrows of humanity; when to be alive and able to breathe the air, to see the fields and bare-branched, budding woods, to watch the clouds chasing each other wherever the young wind wills, to behold that most dear messenger—the bluebird—riding up the sky singing his sweetest to his mate, to hear the crows caw and the lazy flap of their wings where the new seed has been sown—when merely all of this is a cause for rejoicing.

Marjorie, with her hurt heart, her outraged mind and embittered soul, felt the April day sink into the bruised places; and when she looked in at the window and saw the little lad sleeping there in his crib she said to herself:

“Well, there is nothing in life but Billy—that was

life. Now there is still Laddie, I can go on existing for him; to show him how beautiful and gracious and beneficent the world is. For me, it is all finished with forever."

CHAPTER LIV

"Little Boy"

WHEN Duane came home about nine o'clock he was told of his wife's having left town for Westbury. He understood it; he thought it was best. When a man comes home saturated with the public affairs which have demanded and insisted upon his whole attention for the last ten hours, it takes quite a few minutes for him to reestablish the exact frame of mind in which he quitted the same house in the morning. There is a spring and buoyancy and rebound about a man's dealings and relations with the world, which a woman can rarely comprehend.

All the same, it was not ten minutes before the Mayor found himself precisely where he had been before he went down to his office. Indeed, it was now a veritable passion of unrest that took possession of him; he went into her rooms and pottered about them pretty much as he had done last autumn when he was expecting her to come back from Europe. He sat down in there, his head in his hands, to think it out if he could.

De Barreaux had sailed away. After all, perhaps, Marjorie cared no more about him? It was a possibility! The boy up in Canada? Well— He rose and walked the floor. He did not care what Marjorie had done, or been, or anything else at all about it! He loved her. He should go straight down to Westbury and beg and implore her to have him back and that was all there was to be thought about it.

He got up very quickly and ran down stairs and ordered a trap himself.

Allison stood in the lower hall in a half-hesitating way.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Duane."

Billy stopped short.

"There is a—a person, sir, who's been here twice before today wishing to see Mrs. Duane. I have told her Mrs. Duane was from home, sir, but she persists that she must see her!"

"Is it a bill?" asks the master. "If it is, Allison, pay it."

"No sir—I inquired. If you could see the person, sir. She seems in distress of some kind."

"Very well, I'll run down. Where is she? Stop, send her into the library."

Billy waited a moment, and then Fatima came in.

"Oh," he said.

"Billy!" she murmured.

"What can I do for you, Fatima?" he asked.

"Want see Madam, please."

"Madam is down in the country."

"No come back?"

"Not for a long time, I fancy."

Fatima now began to weep.

Billy sighed. He was a man unequal to coping with women's tears—save by one method, and that he had not the slightest inclination toward employing in this instance. Nevertheless he said kindly:

"Better tell me what it is you want, Fatima, and I will do anything for you I can."

"Want little boy back!" ejaculates the Syrian woman, with a fresh burst of tears. "Cannot do more without little boy."

"What little boy?" inquires the Mayor soothingly.

"Yours and mine," she whispers, sinking on an ottoman.

"What!" he gasps. "I heard it was dead."

"God forbid!" cries the woman. "Much love little boy—want him back!"

"Is he lost? What's the matter?" says Billy, grievously troubled in his soul.

"No, no lost. Madam not tell you? Madam very good. Take little boy away. I give. Take away to a school somewhere."

"What!" says Billy, steadying himself.

"Don't know where. Make him good man, she say. Where is? You know! Must have him back, please."

"But I don't know. At least," he adds, "we will see. Fatima," the Mayor fixes his eyes on the Syrian woman, "did you tell Mrs. Duane to whom the boy belonged?"

"Oh yes," she answers frankly. "Why not? The wife not care. If I Billy's wife I not care! Madam not care. She very good. I give little boy. Now I want again. I go back to Beyrout. Cannot without little boy." And then all the scales fell from Billy's eyes.

He gave his word to Fatima that the little boy should be returned to her as soon as he could be fetched from the school. He pledged with himself as sacredly that the child should be provided for and never lost sight of. Then Fatima went away but not before she had, unknown to Billy, lifted the edge of his coat to her lips and kissed it.

CHAPTER LV

An April Morning

BILLY did not reach the Westbury place until about six o'clock in the morning. He entered in his old, masterful fashion. He was insane almost with joy and anticipation, and all a lover's fond, excessive foolery.

He went straight up to her room; it was locked. Then into the next one. He saw the little lad still asleep; he beheld her through the long, open window. He went out there on the terrace to her, close up to her.

"Marjie," he said, sitting down beside her.

She looked up at him in terror.

"Go away, please," she said pleadingly, drawing her fur cloak more closely around her.

"Never," said Billy, "unless you can't forgive me."

"For what?" she asks.

Then Billy told her all that there was to tell about Fatima and De Barreaux from beginning to end, and knelt down on the stones at her feet and begged for pardon and absolution for the awful injustice and sin of his thought against her.

She laid her hand on his shoulder. Then she made her confession to him. The sun was warm and high as she finished speaking.

"My dear! my all! my life!" murmurs Billy. "Say that you forgive me. Can you? Will you? for the sin of my suspicion? for the great black sin of my past, before I met you? Can you, Marjorie? Marjorie—dear?"

"Billy," said his wife, very gently and with simple directness. "I love you."

Then there came the patter of small bare feet through the window from the nursery, and the little lad climbed up and ensconced himself between his father and his mother. Billy seized him and put him on the other side, away—so that he was not between them.

“You little interfering third!” he laughed at the child gleefully, as he kissed it. “Not even you can come between”—he turned to the mother—“you and me!”

His arms were about them both, enclosing and infolding them; and all before their happy eyes lay the springtide and the beauty of the reawakening earth.

THE END









